Chronicles of Resistance:
‘Amili Shi‘i Scholars and Competing Nationalisms in *al-‘Irfan,* 1936 – 1948

By

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بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

To Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Mahdi

Abstract

This thesis explores the attitudes of Lebanese Shi‘i Muslim scholars during three major occasions: the occupation of Palestine, the colonization of the Levant, and the independence of Lebanon. It centers on the intellectual community of Jabal ‘Amil, a region in the Lebanese south, as they navigated the struggle between the Arab nationalist movement and Libanism from 1936 to 1948. This work relies on existing literature to outline the political transformations that took place in and around Jabal ‘Amil during this time, as well as to reveal the history of Shi‘i marginalization in Lebanon. With this as the backdrop, I rely on extant copies of *al-‘Irfan* journal, a ‘Amili Shi‘i publication that was in circulation in the twentieth century, to assess scholarly attitudes toward the Palestinian resistance, the French Mandate, and the new Lebanese nation-state. I argue that the ‘Amili intellectual community was defined by its attachments to Arab and Muslim unity. Although they rejected the French-induced separation of Lebanon from Syria, they came to terms with the Lebanese state as the separation was certain to take place. However, they absorbed Lebanon into their ideas of Arab nationalism, depicting and contributing to Lebanese liberation as a part of Arab nationalism. *Al-‘Irfan* reveals that integration into the new state required them to adopt their assigned identity as a religious sect in order to demand their rights from the sectarian government. At the same time, they were deeply connected to the Palestinian liberation movement and directly resisted the Zionist project on a militant and literary level. The ability of the ‘Amili Shi‘i identity to accommodate different types of national belonging shows that it is founded on the shared cultural and religious values of Arabs and Muslims.

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Introduction

The literature around Shiʻi Muslims in Lebanon has largely been concerned with the community's involvement in contemporary regional politics as opposed to its history, culture, and intellectual contributions. Few have taken up the task of tracing the emergence of Shiʻism in the region or analyzing the sociopolitical transformations undergone by the Shiʻa across time. In Lebanon, some scholars have gone so far as to render the Lebanese Shiʻa invisible in their history books. Historian Max Weiss identifies the erasure of Shiʻi Muslims from the national narrative as the "categorical refusal of Shiʻi presence within the historiographical landscape."[1] Even national discourses surrounding Lebanese history and politics misrepresent Shiʻi Muslims as seclusive, backward, and anti-modern. Despite the forced invisibility of the Shiʻa that is perpetuated by some historians, they have a weighty presence on both a national and international scale. Their role and influence in Lebanon today ought to be understood from the standpoint of their intellectual and political contributions during the birth of the nation in the first half of the twentieth century.

This thesis examines the attitudes of one particular Shiʻi journal, *al-ʻIrfan*, between 1936 and 1948 as its writers witnessed the Zionist occupation of Palestine, the British and French colonization of the Levant, and the creation and liberation of Lebanon. It explores the activism of Shiʻi scholars from Jabal ʻAmil during what was arguably one of the most transformative periods in the region's recent history. Writers for the journal represent a variety of views held by academics and clerics during this turbulent time, but most of them happen to be united in their overall political goals. Shiʻi scholars of the twentieth century often aligned themselves with the Arab nationalist movement and understood their community to be part of the larger Arab and

[1] Weiss, Max. *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʻism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010, 22.

Muslim *umma* (nation). By Shi'i scholars, I refer to modern academics and traditionally educated clerics, as many received an education from both secular institutions and Islamic seminaries in Lebanon and Iraq. For instance, *al-'Irfan*'s founder Ahmad 'Arif al-Zayn (1883–1960) was enrolled in both secular and religious schools throughout his lifetime.[2]

I argue that the works published in *al-'Irfan* demonstrate Shi'i affinity to Muslim and Arab unity in the face of colonial attempts to divide and sectarianize the Levant between 1936 and 1948. It was not until the early 1940s that one can detect a greater adherence to the sectarian discourse in Lebanon because the nation was bound to separate from Syria and the Shi'i community had a pressing need for socioeconomic reform and political representation. Although the journal primarily reflects the views of a particular group of Shi'i scholars and cannot be taken as representative of the entire Shi'i community, *al-'Irfan* is still "indispensable for understanding the history of Lebanon's Shia."[3] Historian Tarif Khalidi further suggests that the journal had an active and transformational role for the Shi'a of Lebanon. He writes, "It was not simply a faithful mirror of its region and period. It was also a direct agent and medium of intellectual change."[4]

Identifying the 'Amili Shi'i Muslims

Shi'i Muslims are defined by their belief that Imam 'Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad, was the rightful spiritual and political successor of the Prophet. They regard the first three caliphs according to Sunni doctrine as illegitimate authorities who bypassed the Prophet's instructions to appoint Imam 'Ali as the *umma*'s next leader. Twelver Shi'i

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[2] Ahmad, 'Ali Raghib Haydar. *'Ulama' al-Din wa al-Ittijahat al-Siyasiyya Li Shi'at Lubnan*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Wala', 2018.
[3] Ajami, Fouad. *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*. Ebook. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012, 11.
[4] Khalidi, Tarif. "Shaykh Ahmad 'Arif al-Zayn and al-'Irfan." In *Intellectual Life in the Arab East*, edited by Marwan Buheiry. Beirut, Lebanon: American University of Beirut, 1981, 110.

Muslims presently make up the majority of all Shi‘i Muslims in Lebanon, and they are characterized by their belief in the twelve *a'imma* (s. *imam*), who are religious leaders descending from Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Sayyida Fatima and Imam ‘Ali. Twelvers are also called *Ja‘fari* Muslims due to their adherence to the school of the sixth *imam*, Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq. The Twelver Shi‘i Muslims that reside in what was Greater Syria were further known as *metawila* (s. *mutwali*). Some scholars believe that the name derives from the word *tawalli*, meaning to make someone a *wali*, or religious authority, as in the case of Shi‘i reverence of Imam ‘Ali.[5] Others argue that the word comes from a phrase that the Shi‘a shouted during battle: "*mut waliyyan li ‘Ali,*" or "die a friend of ‘Ali."[6] The term *metawila*, although absent from official government documents, was used colloquially and recorded by Orientalist travelers to the Levant. While locals and Orientalists evidently employed the word in a derogatory way, it seems there was a push from Shi‘i intellectuals to reclaim this marker of identity. In *al-‘Irfan*, Shi‘i scholars like Shaykh Ahmad Rida (1872-1953) and Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin (1865-1952) used the name in their works recounting ‘Amili history.[7] Although the *metawila* lived across Greater Syria, the largest populations were in the Biqa‘, a region in the east of Lebanon, and Jabal ‘Amil, the mountainous region to the south. The Western Biqa‘ has some geographical overlap with Jabal ‘Amil, and the Shi‘i communities of both areas are historically interconnected. My research focuses on Jabal ‘Amil as it is the birthplace of *al-‘Irfan* journal, and it produced a unique intellectual community in the wake of Ottoman and French rule.

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[5] Al-Muhajir, Ja‘far. *Asami al-Shi‘a wa ma Fiha min Khafaya Tarikhihim*. Ba‘albak, Lebanon: Markaz Baha' al-Din al-‘Amili, 2015, 60.

[6] Ibid, 60-61.

[7] Al-Amin, Muhsin. *Khitat Jabal ‘Amil*. al-Rouwais, Lebanon: Dar al-Mahajja al-Bayda', 2002, 60.

It is important to highlight the role of Shi‘i scholars during the French Mandate and Lebanese independence because, as educators and disseminators of Shi‘i doctrine, they reveal the ways in which religious values translate into political action.[8] Integral to Shi‘i belief is the resistance to tyranny and the pursuit of justice. Shi‘i Muslims maintain that their twelve religious leaders were deprived of the *imama*, or imamate, despite their divine right of authority over the Muslim *umma*. However, in many cases, the Shi‘a explain that the imams used their divine knowledge to determine their response to the dispossession of their leadership.[9] In the case of Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba, the son of Imam ‘Ali and the third Shi‘i leader, no war was waged against Mu‘awiya of the Umayyad Caliphate. Knowing that there were few loyal to him and that a war would cause a rift in the Muslim *umma*, he is described as strategic in his avoidance of war.[10] On the other hand, Imam al-Hasan’s brother Imam al-Husayn led a campaign against Mu‘awiya’s son Yazid after he assumed the role of caliph in 680 CE (61 AH). This resulted in the death of the Imam and his companions, as well as the captivity of his family. Despite the tragic outcome, which is mourned yearly during the month of Muharram, the Battle of Karbala’ is regarded as a victory in which authentic Shi‘i Islam was preserved for generations to come. It provided a lesson to not only revolt against the Yazid of one’s time, but to strive against oppressive social, political, and economic orders through the protection and personification of Islamic values.[11]

In addition to the importance of the leaders of the past, Shi‘i Muslims believe that the twelfth *imam*, Imam al-Mahdi, is not only presently alive but has been in occultation (*ghayba*) since 941 CE (329 AH). They maintain allegiance to him and await his return during which, according to

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[8] Cole, Juan. *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi‘ite Islam*. New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2002, 176.
[9] Ridwani, Ali Asghar. *The Uprising of Ashura and Responses to Doubts*. Translated by Kelvin Lembani. London: ABWA Publishing and Printing Center, 2010, 263.
[10] Ibid, 261.
[11] Al-Jibouri, Yasin. *Karbala and Beyond*. Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2011, 257.

Shi'i doctrine, he will usher in a time of peace and justice. To hasten and prepare for the reappearance of the *imam*, the Shi'a take on the role of enjoining good and forbidding evil at a personal, social, and political level.[12] According to Hussein Gharbieh, *'ulama'* (clerics) employ the politics of involvement or non-involvement during the *ghayba*. The former, also called activists, are characterized by active participation in politics ranging from the assumption of roles in office to initiating revolutions. Those belonging to the latter category are labelled as quietists who believe that "the pursuit of power is the concern of the infallible Imam."[13] However, this binary does not capture the reality of Shi'i scholars' political decision-making since, like the different approaches of Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn, they act according to the circumstances of their respective contexts. In the case of the Shi'a of Jabal 'Amil and as evidenced throughout *al-'Irfan*'s publications, political activism was promoted as a form of worship, and religion justified attachments to different political movements. From the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, scholars called for religious unity and mobilization against the imperial and colonial regimes that ruled over Greater Syria. This included calls for Palestinian liberation and later Lebanese independence, both of which were vehicles for expressing religious values.

Although it is often taken for granted that the religions of the Middle East are distinct sects, it is important to understand that its inhabitants did not always view religious differences that way. This is especially true for Twelver Shi'i Muslims who understood themselves to be adherents of the *Ja'fari madhhab* (school of thought or doctrine) alongside the four Sunni schools: *Hanafi*,

[12] Vaezi, Ahmad. *Shia Political Thought*. London: Islamic Centre of England, 2004, 19.
[13] Gharbieh, Hussein. *Lebanese Confessionalism and the Creation of the Shi'i Identity*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Manhal al-Lubnani, 2010, 45.

Hanbali, *Shafi'i*, and *Maliki*.[14] In fact, one of the most influential Shi'i scholars, Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi (1872-1957), was a large proponent of Muslim unity and called upon Sunni *'ulama'* to recognize Shi'ism as an equal *madhab*.[15] Part of my research addresses the roots of Shi'i-Sunni sectarian distinction, which many historians trace back to the early twentieth century.[16] France helped model the Lebanese government after the Ottoman *millet* (religious community) system to allow confessional communities to rule themselves based on their respective religious laws. Under the French, the Shi'a were established as a new *millet* or sect despite being part of the Muslim community during Ottoman rule. As they approached the independence of Lebanon, prominent scholars began to recognize a need to appeal to the state in its sectarian terms. Even Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi found that the Shi'a had "a distinct set of interests vis-à-vis other Lebanese communities." This led to a period of intellectual resistance and subsequent transformation of Shi'i political identity in Jabal 'Amil.

Setting the Stage: Jabal 'Amil in the Ottoman Empire

Under Ottoman rule in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Shi'a of Greater Syria inhabited mostly rural areas where they were socioeconomically and politically marginalized. Unlike other minorities in the empire, they were not formally recognized by the state even when Ottoman administrative reforms were "apportioning positions of political representation according to sectarian affiliation."[17] Rula Jurdi Abisaab and Malek Abisaab describe the Shi'a, in terms of their legal status, as having been "a legitimate Muslim sect on a par with their Sunnite

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[14] Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi, 'Abd al-Husayn. *Al-Murāja'āt: A Shi'i-Sunni Dialogue*. Translated by Yasin Al-Jibouri. Qom, Iran: Ansariyan Publications, 2005, 9.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism and the Creation of the Shi'i Identity*, 44.
[17] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 56.

counterparts."[18] In other words, the Ottomans considered the Shi'a to be Muslims and, as such, they were subject to the *Hanafi* Sunni courts as opposed to *Ja'fari* Shi'i rulings.[19] This rendered them an invisible minority in the eyes of the law, but they were occasionally targeted by discriminatory policies. For example, they lacked the religious freedom to mourn the death of Imam al-Husayn during the anniversary of his martyrdom. Restrictions on Shi'i *majales* (s. *majlis*), or commemoration ceremonies, became especially prominent as the empire was nearing its collapse.[20] This is unsurprising as the resistance of Imam al-Husayn and his companions during the Battle of Karbala' has been remembered and used to shape Shi'i political outlook and participation. Because Arab nationalists, including the 'Amili Shi'a, were mobilizing themselves at the time, Ottoman authorities sought to prevent congregations that could lead to further political dissent. Shi'i Muslims in the Levant, like other Arab Muslims, thus engaged in resistance efforts against the empire due to increasing resentment borne from mandatory conscription, unfair trade policies, and general dissatisfaction with foreign rule.[21]

Besides the complicated nature of their legal status throughout the late Ottoman period, historian Tamara Chalabi explains that the areas inhabited by the Shi'a were also subject to financial hardship and persecution. For example, Shi'i Muslims had their harvests confiscated according to a tax called "*balsa*, which roughly translates as 'extortion'."[22] The Abisaabs write that, "the army punished those who did not pay the *balsa* by breaking into their homes and destroying their winter staples. When caught by Ottoman soldiers, a defector faced certain

[18] Abisaab, Rula Jurdi, and Malek Abisaab. *The Shi'ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*. First. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014, 10.
[19] Tibawi, Abdul Latif. *A Modern History of Syria Including Lebanon and Palestine*. London: Macmillan St. Martin's Press, 1969, 21.
[20] Siklawi, Rami. "The Social and Political Identities of the Shi'i Community in Lebanon." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2014): 278–91, 281.
[21] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*, 175.
[22] Chalabi, Tamara. *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil and the New Lebanon*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 55.

death."[23] The Shiʻa were also dissatisfied with some of their local *zuʻama'*, or feudal lords, who collaborated with the state and benefited from greater land control after Ottoman reforms in 1858. Even after Ottoman rule, the descendants of a few feudal dynasties, such as the al-Asʻad family, generated dissatisfaction among some Shiʻi scholars for cooperating with the French colonial regime. Many of these scholars came from families known as the *wujaha'*, or notables, who witnessed an increase in influence due to their education and financial status.[24] One of the influential *wujaha'* (s. *wajih*) throughout the end of Ottoman rule and the French Mandate was Ahmad ʻArif al-Zayn, creator of *al-ʻIrfan*.

During Shiʻi marginalization, other minorities in the Ottoman Empire, such as the Maronite Christians and the Druze, were growing economically due to financial and political support from the British and French. The Shiʻa, however, with no representation or foreign intervention on their behalf, experienced socioeconomic marginalization which only worsened the deadly health problems they experienced through famines, epidemics, and polluted water sources.[25] Moreover, educational reforms established by the Ottomans largely benefited the Maronites and Druze of Mount Lebanon, while the Shiʻa instead saw high rates of illiteracy.[26] This history of marginalization, which by no means represents the entirety of the Shiʻi experience under Ottoman rule, was later exploited by the French. The colonial regime, seeking to divide the Muslim population of the newly defined Lebanese nation, presented itself as a savior of the Shiʻa and a bestower of religious freedoms by insisting on the legal separation of Shiʻi and Sunni Muslims. [27]

[23] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʻites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 8.
[24] Khalidi, "Shaykh Ahmad ʻArif al-Zayn and al- ʻIrfan," 121.
[25] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʻites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 8.
[26] Sayed, Linda. "Education and Reconfiguring Lebanese Shiʿi Muslims into the Nation-State during the French Mandate." *Die Welt Des Islams* 59, no. 3–4 (2019): 282–312. https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-05934P02, 289.
[27] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʻites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, xiv.

Intellectual Resistance: The Works of *al-ʻIrfan*

During the nineteenth century, most Arabs in the Ottoman territories had a broad and multifaceted sense of identity that incorporated cultural, religious, and ethnic belonging. Many found attachment to a shared Arab heritage, yet simultaneously did not directly oppose the Ottoman Empire.[28] Historian Ernest Dawn explains that "the process of forming a nationalist self-view among the Arabs began with the adaptation to Near Eastern conditions of the European concept of patria and patriotism."[29] This idea of an Arab *watan* (homeland), however, did not take the form of open hostility toward the empire until around World War I. For some in Lebanon and Syria, "Arabism and regional patriotism were mingled and given predominance over Ottomanism."[30] By the early twentieth century, Muslim Arabs, along with some Christians, converted this regional pride into the pursuit of an independent Arab nation by rebelling against the Ottomans. Conversely, Maronite Christians began to develop the idea of Lebanon and pushed for Lebanese nationalism that was not only free from the Ottomans but separate from Muslim-majority Syria.

In response to their socioeconomic conditions and their growing dissatisfaction with living under Ottoman rule, some members of the Shiʻi intellectual community in Greater Syria participated in the Arab nationalist movement of the early twentieth century. While they generally maintained an awareness of Shiʻi distinctness and were concerned with the issues of the ʻAmili Shiʻi community, they also viewed themselves as part of the Arab nation and the Muslim *umma*, and spoke to broader issues afflicting the Arab world.[31] Before the Arabist

[28] Dawn, C. Ernest. "The Origins of Arab Nationalism." In *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, edited by Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, and Reeva Simon. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, 8.
[29] Ibid, 4.
[30] Ibid, 8.
[31] Sayed, "Education and Reconfiguring Lebanese Shiʿi Muslims into the Nation-State during the French Mandate," 286.

movement became more widespread in 1914, "the earliest Arab nationalists disseminated their doctrines by means of publications."[32] This was also true for Shiʿi scholars who began with calls for Ottoman reform and later expressed a desire for Arab liberation from the empire.[33] One platform for such activism was the Shiʿi journal *al-ʿIrfan*. It was founded in Sidon in 1909 by Shaykh Ahmad ʿArif al-Zayn, and it included a variety of works ranging from poetry and short stories to news and academic articles. Its name means "knowledge" and its publications promoted Arab nationalism during First World War.

According to its November 1913 issue, *al-ʿIrfan* situated itself as a journal that bridged the intellectual gap between scholars of different nations. It highlights its identity as an Arab Shiʿi journal, stating that its goal was "to be a link for acquaintance between the scholars and writers of Iraq and Jabal ʿAmil and between the scholars and writers of other countries. It takes special care of ancient and modern Shiʿi affairs because [it has] not seen any paper that has carried out this task."[34] Al-Zayn had attempted to create other Shiʿi newspapers in 1903, but they were forcefully closed by Ottoman authorities. The creation of *al-ʿIrfan* was solidified only after the newly established reformist government declared the Ottoman constitution in 1908, but the journal still faced censorship before and during World War I.[35]

At the end of the First World War, the post-Ottoman Arabs attempted to create an independent Arab nation that would be ruled under King Faysal I (1885-1933) who was given the title of the King of the Arabs in 1916. Born in Iraq as the third son of the Hashemite Grand Emir and Sharif of Mecca, Husayn bin ʿAli, he claimed direct descent from Prophet Muhammad. King Faysal acted as the spearhead and symbol of pan-Arabism and Muslim unity, leading

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[32] Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism," 11.
[33] Chalabi, *The Shiʿis of Jabal ʿAmil and the New Lebanon*, 171.
[34] "Fatihat al-Sana al-Khamisa." *Al-ʿIrfan* 5, no. 1 (November 1913), 1.
[35] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʿism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 58.

rebellions against the Ottomans to create a unified Arab state in the Levant and Iraq. His Arab nationalist project was backed by the British who offered an empty promise to support Arab independence so they could ensure the removal of Ottoman influence in the region. Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the French and the British became mandate-holders of its former territories in the Levant and Iraq. King Faysal established an Arab government in Damascus at the end of 1918 and became King of the Arab Kingdom of Syria in 1920. Shortly after, the French took control of Lebanon and Syria in accordance with the San Remo conference, sparking the Franco-Syrian war in which the French successfully expelled Faysal from Syria.

Throughout this period, the Shiʿi scholars of Jabal ʿAmil supported King Faysal's movement which incorporated their region into the proposed Arab nation.[36] *Al-ʿIrfan*, however, was evidently limited in its ability to be an outlet for expressing these ideas. There appears to be a period of censorship and closure as the fifth volume ended in 1914, but the publication did not return for the sixth volume until December 1920.[37] Despite this, Shiʿi inclinations toward Arab nationalism persisted even after Faysal's defeat in the Franco-Syrian war of 1920 and his death in 1933. The arrival of the French colonial regime sparked outrage from the Arab nationalists, including Shiʿi Muslims, who wanted to remain united with Syria. The French also reinstated the oppressive Ottoman tax system, guaranteeing the continuation of Shiʿi economic marginalization.[38] Moreover, this non-Muslim foreign power worked with Maronite Christians to create Lebanon as a Christian country, propagating Libanism, or Lebanese nationalism, which many in Greater Syria regarded as an unwelcome alternative to Arab nationalism.

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[36] Chalabi, *The Shiʿis of Jabal ʿAmil and the New Lebanon*, 34.
[37] "Fatihat al-Mujallad al-Sadis." *Al-ʿIrfan* 6, no. 1 (December 1920), 1.
[38] Khalidi, "Shaykh Ahmad ʿArif al-Zayn and al-ʿIrfan," 123.

‘Amili Shi‘i scholars also used Arab nationalism to oppose the British-backed Zionist occupation of Palestine, the country with which the Shi‘a were commercially and communally linked. Before the colonial regimes established the borders between northern Palestine and Jabal ‘Amil, the two communities had close social and economic ties. The Shi‘a were directly affected by the Zionist project through the obstruction of markets, the separation of kin, and the loss of land.[39] During that time, Shi‘i scholars assumed the role of activists and took to the pages of *al-‘Irfan* and other local magazines and journals to express their views and frustrations against the British and French authorities. Members of the ‘Amili Shi‘i community also participated in active resistance against the Zionist forces by fighting alongside Palestinians.

Throughout this period of intense political change and tension, *al-‘Irfan* continued to serve as “a vehicle for intellectual transformation,” and it placed the Shi‘a of Jabal ‘Amil in conversation with other Muslim scholars across the Arab world.[40] It was part of the Arab *Nahda* (renaissance) and reveals early Shi‘i attempts to secure their community’s interests. By the late 1930s and early 1940s, the calls of the Arab nationalists to unite with Syria began to die down. Many united with Libanists to instead focus their attention on liberating both Syria *and* Lebanon from French rule. This was a gradual transformation that one may detect in the works of *al-‘Irfan,* as scholars began to concede to the inevitable Lebanese state and their distinct legal identity. However, themes of Arab pride and Muslim unity persisted in their demands for the independence of Lebanon and the freedom of Palestine. Alongside these clear attachments to the broader Arab, Muslim, and later Lebanese communities, *al-‘Irfan* writers continued to call for the fulfillment of Shi‘i rights by the state.

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[39] Khalidi, “Shaykh Ahmad ‘Arif al-Zayn and al-‘Irfan,” 118.
[40] Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil and the New Lebanon*, 169.

<u>Chapter One: The ‘Amili Shi‘a and the Struggle for Palestine, 1936-1948</u>

The Palestinian struggle is crucial for understanding how the ‘Amili Shi‘i intellectual community developed its identity in the context of the Arab nationalist movement and foreign occupation. Through their contributions to Palestinian liberation, one may notice an emergence of Shi‘i Islamic language that, rather than promote sectarian differentiation, was used to bind different religious groups under the banner of Arab identity. *Al-‘Irfan*’s publications demonstrate a growing ‘Amili Shi‘i consciousness that is behind their support for Sunni revolutionaries and their literary inclusion of Christians and non-Arabs. In other words, the Shi‘i scholars find that, through Islamic conceptions of freedom, justice, and *jihad* (struggle or warfare), the Shi‘a are part and parcel of the movement for Arab unity and liberation. *Al-‘Irfan* does not just portray this movement as compatible with Shi‘i Islam throughout the 1930s and 40s, but as a means that allows them to embody and practice those Islamic values.

<u>Jabal ‘Amil and Palestine’s Shared History</u>

To understand why the case of Palestine deeply impacted the sociopolitical identity of the ‘Amili Shi‘a, it is important to outline the historical relationship between the inhabitants of Jabal ‘Amil and the northern Palestinians before the end of World War I. Not much about this has been explored by historians, but it is often suggested that the two communities were linked as a result of social and commercial ties. This was the case since the Ottoman period during which authorities placed Jabal ‘Amil under political administrations that linked them to Damascus, Acre, or Jerusalem. As a result, the Shi‘a of Jabal ‘Amil relied on the Port of Haifa for commerce as opposed to the Port of Beirut. Craftsmen from the towns of Bint Jubayl and Mashghara sold items such as shoes and leather to Palestinian markets, and the weekly bazaars in Bint Jubayl and

al-Nabatiyya attracted merchants and traders from Syria and Palestine.[41] Moreover, the inhabitants of Jabal ʻAmil mainly used the Palestinian currency for their economic activities until 1942.[42] The French were disinterested in the industries of the area because they were mostly confined to agriculture and crafts for local use. This gave the Shiʻa both a sense of economic independence and inferiority as French interest and efforts contributed to economic growth in other parts of the region, financially strengthening other sectarian communities.[43]

The ʻAmili Shiʻa not only had economic links to northern Palestine, but they had relatives residing there as well.[44] Family ties meant that "social relations between Arabs of southern Lebanon and northern Palestine continued to be intimate."[45] These associations caused frequent travel between the two regions, and a sense of kinship developed as a result. Therefore, once the British and French divided the Levant during the San Remo Conference in April 1920, the border between Palestine and Jabal ʻAmil, which was thenceforth labelled as south Lebanon, caused outrage among the Shiʻa, including the intellectual class. There is evidence suggesting that some Shiʻi scholars had a negative perception of the British before the Mandate period even as they supported the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans.[46]

By 1920, there were still hopes and expectations for a united Arab state, and the Shiʻi Muslims of Jabal ʻAmil saw themselves as part of Greater Syria, which included the Palestinian territory. They did not recognize nor feel a sense of belonging toward Greater Lebanon, which emerged as a result of regional pride for Mount Lebanon amongst the Maronite Christians. After the establishment of the mandates, the Shiʻ a found themselves "in a different country than their

[41] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʻites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 23.
[42] Siklawi, "The Social and Political Identities of the Shiʻi Community in Lebanon," 283.
[43] Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism and the Creation of the Shiʻi Identity*, 36.
[44] Al Safa, Muhammad Jabir. *Tarikh Jabal ʻAmil*. 2nd ed. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Nahar, 1981.
[45] Petran, Tabitha. *The Struggle over Lebanon*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987, 66.
[46] Chalabi, *The Shiʻis of Jabal ʻAmil and the New Lebanon*, 42.

traditional markets to the south."[47] This caused the economy of Jabal ʻAmil to suffer since the newly drawn borders prevented craftsmen reaching their markets in Palestine, and the bazaars in Bint Jubayl and al-Nabatiyya declined due to less frequent visitors from the neighboring countries.[48] This economic hardship would have lasting effects on the Shiʻi community of south Lebanon and their socioeconomic status for decades after the colonial severance between Palestine and Jabal ʻAmil. Even after the 1920 convention, Zionists under the leadership of Chaim Weizmann demanded to expand Israeli territory up towards the Litani River which would have been an important source of water.[49] The British, however, did not push for this expansion as they prioritized establishing the Zionist state to begin with.[50]

In 1923, the Paulet–Newcombe Agreement between Britain and France further specified and outlined the border between Palestine and the newly defined south Lebanon, as several villages at the border had become a point of contestation. Seven of them were Shiʻi-majority villages known as Tabrikha, Saliha, al-Malkiyye, al-Nabi Yushaʻ, Qadas, Hunin, and Abel al-Qamh. Under the new agreement, they were placed under British Mandate rule and became a part of Palestine. This cut the residents off from the ʻAmili community with whom they shared religious, historical, and familial ties. However, it is important to note that the ʻAmili Shiʻi Muslims also felt a sense of kinship with their Palestinian Sunni neighbors due to the aforementioned historical, commercial, and social associations. They also felt that they belonged to the same Muslim and Arab identity, which were crucial aspects of their support for the Arab nationalist movement across the Levant. With the new border, Palestinians and the ʻAmili population suddenly found themselves in separate nations. Despite this, people still crossed over

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[47] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shiʻite Islam*, 176.
[48] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʻites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 23.
[49] Chalabi, *The Shiʻis of Jabal ʻAmil and the New Lebanon*, 95.
[50] Ibid.

into Jabal ʿAmil and Palestine, and the Mandate administrations acknowledged this with the "Agreement between Palestine and Syria and the Lebanon to Facilitate Good Neighborly Relations in Connection with Frontier Questions."[51] The establishment of the Israeli occupation in 1948, however, would later sever the two regions completely.

Participation in the Anti-Zionist Resistance

The shared sense of identity is why the British-backed Zionist invasion of Palestine in the 1930s and 40s saw the Shiʿa of Jabal ʿAmil, along with other communities across the Arab world, express powerful condemnation and outrage. The war that ensued between the Arabs and Zionists caused a mass expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland, and even led to the depopulation of the seven Shiʿi villages. The sense of loss that came about as a result of the Zionist occupation was felt throughout Jabal ʿAmil and is captured in *al-ʿIrfan*'s publications during this time. During the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt, locals took to the streets to protest British imperialism and its policies allowing hundreds of thousands of European Jews to immigrate to Palestine and establish a "Jewish homeland." The ʿAmili Shiʿa contributed direct financial support and even participated in the revolts. Inhabitants of al-Nabatiyya provided weapons to Palestinian fighters, many of whom found shelter in Bint Jubayl, and Amili residents took up arms, intercepting Zionist supply trucks and fighting alongside Arab resistance leader Shaykh Muhammad al-Ashmar.[52] The tumultuous year of 1936, which marked not only the start of the Arab Revolt in Palestine but the Bint Jubayl Revolt against France, caused inhabitants of the Levant to view the Palestinian resistance as a first step toward the liberation of all of Greater

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[51] Chalabi, *The Shiʿis of Jabal ʿAmil and the New Lebanon*, 95.
[52] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʿites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 24.

Syria.[53] The Arab nationalist calls echoing from Palestine were a refusal of the 1936 Franco-Lebanese and Franco-Syrian treaties that sought to crush any expectations for a united Levant.[54]

Along with the oppressive circumstances under French colonialism and their monopoly over the tobacco industry, religious sensitivities heightened by the commemoration of Muharram contributed to Shiʻi support for the Palestinian cause.[55] According to Michael Bracy and Najwa Raouda, "as both rioting and food shortages extend[ed] across the region in 1936, village leaders, such as Siham Fafqi, frequently called to Palestinian villagers," exclaiming that they would come to "carry [their] loads."[56] These reactions toward the Palestinian resistance extend from the Shiʻa's ethnic and religious sense of kinship that is tied to a shared Islamic identity and regional heritage. In addition to providing vocal support for the Arab Revolt, some Shiʻi *ʻulama'* and *wujaha'* in Lebanon participated in protests and other efforts to promote the resistance.[57] This was part of a wider trend of support across the Shiʻi world that mirrored the stance of other Muslim and Christian Arabs. For example, Islamic scholars in Najaf and Karbala' condemned British and Zionist aspirations, and Shiʻi scholars in Lebanon extended their support to al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husayni (1897-1974). Al-Husayni was the pan-Arabist Palestinian Grand Mufti who served as a leader of the Palestinian resistance throughout the Mandate period. During the Arab Revolt in the late 1930s, he was expelled from Palestine by British forces and took refuge in Bint Jubayl.[58] He later met with Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi who, along with other Shiʻi scholars, pledged his commitment to the cause.

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[53] Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria Including Lebanon and Palestine*, 358.
[54] Chalabi, *The Shiʻis of Jabal ʻAmil and the New Lebanon*, 132.
[55] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʻism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 200.
[56] Bracy, Michael, and Najwa Raouda. "One Ideology, Two Paths: Gender, Education, and Emigration among the Lebanese Shiʿa of Jabal ʿĀmil and the Biqāʻ." *Review of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 210–17, 214.
[57] Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism and the Creation of the Shiʻi Identity*, 84.
[58] Ibid.

Literary Contributions to Palestinian Liberation

The literary works of the Shiʻi intellectual community, when examined alongside their social and political context, can further one's understanding of their self-identification and transformation throughout the Mandate period. *Al-ʻIrfan* publications demonstrate the views and priorities of Shiʻi scholars and intellectuals through poetry, short stories, news articles, opinion pieces, and other literary categories. From the late 1920s until 1939, *al-ʻIrfan* shifted from focusing on world news to stressing issues in the Middle East. More specifically, its topics covered Syria, Palestine, Iraq, and Egypt, and as Tarif Khalidi explains, "this shrinkage of geographical coverage meant a strengthening of the Arab and Islamic bridges."[59] Authors placed significant emphasis on Palestinian liberation, which served an important role in the development of Shiʻi identity in new Lebanon and promoted Islamic values through Arab nationalism. They understood the occupation of Palestine and the division of the Levant as a "deep moral crisis precipitated in the East by the West."[60]

Although the French censored *al-ʻIrfan* and restricted its publications in 1936 due to its anti-French and Arab nationalist articles, it resumed regular publication in 1937.[61] The journal had a recurring segment titled "Most Important News and Opinions" (*Aham al-Akhbar wa al-Ara'*) for world and local news, which continuously updated readers about the situation in Palestine and developments surrounding the cause. It is in these articles that Shiʻi intellectuals most evidently used Arab nationalism as a manifestation of Islamic values and beliefs. In the November 1937 issue, which was published in the context of the Arab Revolt, Ahmad ʻArif al-Zayn recounts the "sinister" Balfour Declaration on its twentieth anniversary, deeming it

[59] Khalidi, "Shaykh Ahmad ʻArif al-Zayn and al-ʻIrfan," 118.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Chalabi, *The Shiʻis of Jabal ʻAmil and the New Lebanon*, 173.

responsible for the "cruel treatment of the free Palestinians."[62] He likens the situation in Palestine, "the Arab country," to the invasions of the Muslim Arab world by the Byzantines and the Khazars in the eighth century, which notably ended in Arab victory.[63] This reference to the Byzantine-Arab wars during the early years of Islam demonstrates how Shiʿi scholars may have viewed the invasion of Palestine as a continuation of the wars waged by Western powers against Muslim Arabs. Moreover, al-Zayn explains, "This situation, which is the worst situation, will not change except with the cancellation of the Balfour promise, the reversal of the Jewish migration, and the issuance of Palestine's independence and freedom like her neighbors."[64] He ends these demands with verse 195 of chapter 2 in the Qur'an (*Surat al-Baqara*): "and Allah loves the doers of good."[65] The selection of this verse is significant as this part of the chapter encourages Muslims to contribute to Holy War, whether it be through fighting against their attackers or through providing financial support. Therefore, Palestinian liberation and Arab resistance to French and British colonization constituted a form of Islamic *jihad* as understood by Shiʿi scholars. This highlights the ways in which Islamic values were deeply intertwined with the movement for Arab liberation.

The writers of *al-ʿIrfan* produced additional content about Palestine throughout the Arab Revolt that went beyond recurring news updates. A 1938 unauthored work titled "Bloody Palestine," recounts the situation to the south, and the writer criticizes Britain and the United States for supporting the Zionist invasion.[66] It calls Palestinians "our brothers, the sons of southern Syria," displaying not only a sense of kinship, but one founded on belonging to Greater

[62] "Aham al-Akhbar wa al-Ara'." *Al-ʿIrfan* 27, no. 6 (November 1937): 585–89, 589.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] "Falastin al-Damiya." *Al-ʿIrfan* 28, no. 6 (November 1938): 523–27, 523.

Syria.[67] It also highlights the support for Palestine on the basis of Arab and Islamic identity; "The Arabs in particular, and Islam in general, have sympathized with Palestine, as much as they could of material and moral support."[68] These two categories of identity – one ethnic and one religious – are crucial for Shiʿi self-identification in Jabal ʿAmil. This is especially the case in the context of French colonialism and the creation of a Lebanese state that sought to incorporate Shiʿi-majority regions into its borders. Notably, the author describes the Arabs in particular (*khasa*) and Muslims more broadly (*ʿamma*), suggesting that they view the former as a subset of the latter. Global Islamic unity took precedence for the ʿAmili Shiʿi intellectuals, and it was fully compatible with Arabism in the colonial context. Arab nationalism was a way of incorporating Arab Christians into the resistance movement and promoting a sense of kinship based on shared ethnic and regional affiliations. This specific part of the text is accompanied by an image of the spearhead of the Arab Revolt, "His eminence, the Grand Mufti al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni."[69] Shiʿi scholars of Jabal ʿAmil held this Sunni Islamic scholar and revolutionary leader in high regard, further demonstrating the precedence of Islamic unity over Shiʿi particularism. This is not to say that the Shiʿa were not aware of their distinct beliefs and practices, but their differences did not cause division nor promote sectarianism.

The 1938 article also displays the gradual changes that were occurring within the Shiʿi intellectual community at the time. During the Arab Revolt, Shiʿi sentiments toward the new Lebanese state became more ambivalent and less antagonistic. It was not the case that they had abandoned all attachments and hopes for a Greater Syria, but as their incorporation into Lebanon became inevitable, the Shiʿi Muslims of Jabal ʿAmil had to adapt. One article includes a poem

[67] "Falastin al-Damiya." *Al-ʿIrfan* 28, no. 6 (November 1938): 523–27, 524.
[68] Ibid, 525.
[69] Ibid.

about the Palestinian cause written by Beshara al-Khoury, a Maronite who would eventually become the first president of Lebanon. This is the same work that depicts Lebanese Shi'i attachments to an Islamic, and by extension, Arab identity. Throughout the thirties and forties, there is a definite shift in Shi'i attitudes toward being incorporated into the new and inexorable Lebanese nation. Much of this has to do with the general Lebanese response to the Arab Revolt, which was supportive of the Palestinians.[70]

During the Arab-Israeli war from 1948 to 1949, the Shi'a of Lebanon reacted to the Palestinian cause with a stronger sense of urgency, as did the rest of the Arab world. Coverage and updates about the situation in Palestine became more frequent, and men from Jabal 'Amil participated in the war against the Zionists. Rula and Malek Abisaab find that Lebanese Shi'i Muslims enlisted in the *Jaysh al-Inqadh al-'Arabi* (Arab Salvation Army) in 1948 and made the south of Lebanon "one of the central platforms for the Arab-Israeli War."[71] It is also worth mentioning that Zionist forces crossed the border into Jabal 'Amil and massacred and occupied approximately twenty-two Shi'i-majority villages.[72] One oft-cited massacre occurred in Hula in which two Israel Defense Forces (IDF) officers shot dead more than eighty Shi'i villagers.

The 1948 *Nakba*, or catastrophe, in Palestine had far-reaching consequences for the people of Jabal 'Amil. The establishment of the state of Israel permanently cut off the ties between northern Palestine and southern Lebanon in 1948, beginning a process of "deterioration" that saw "trading towns stagnated, artisanal production diminished, and the development of nascent agricultural industries ceased."[73] Moreover, around 100,000 Palestinians

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[70] El-Solh, Raghid. *Lebanon and Arabism: National Identity and State Formation*. London and New York: I.B.Tauris Publishers, 2004, 226.
[71] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shi'ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 25.
[72] Siklawi, "The Social and Political Identities of the Shi'i Community in Lebanon," 284.
[73] Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon*, 68.

who were forcefully displaced from their homeland relocated to south Lebanon, which was already dealing with a lack of adequate resources.[74] The war in the south accelerated the Shiʻi migration to Beirut's suburbs where their living conditions proved them to be the most marginalized community in the city due sectarian politics and discriminatory welfare programs.[75]

The aforementioned seven Shiʻi-majority villages that became a part of Palestine through Britain and France's border agreement were subsequently occupied and depopulated by Zionist forces, and their inhabitants were either killed or forced to flee to Lebanon. A sizeable Palestinian population settled in Tyre, the Shiʻi-majority coastal city where they were "instrumental in introducing new political concerns, in importing pan-Arabist ideas and doctrines."[76] Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi did not want young schoolchildren from Palestine to miss out on their education while displaced, so he introduced an alternative curriculum in his school *al-Jaʻfariyya* to allow them to continue their studies.[77] Both British colonization and Zionist aspirations "disrupted further the shared social history and economic links" between Palestine and south Lebanon, and "the Palestinians' crisis and tragedy had a more profound manifestation in the South than in any other part of Grand Liban."[78]

There is an abundance of poems found in *al-ʻIrfan* throughout the 1930s and 40s, with many appealing to Arab nationalist sentiments, martyrdom, and freedom. The featured poets are not only Shiʻi Muslims, but they come from a variety of religious and regional backgrounds. As mentioned, Beshara al-Khoury's poem for Palestine was featured in 1938. Another poem published in a 1946 issue of the journal is further indicative of Shiʻi ʻAmili attitudes toward the

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[74] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shiʻite Islam*, 176.
[75] Shanahan, Rodger. *The Shiʻa of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics*. New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2005, 34.
[76] Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 86.
[77] Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism and the Creation of the Shiʻi Identity*, 85.
[78] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʻites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 26.

Palestinian cause and Arab nationalism. It is written by Zahra al-Hurr, also known as the Poet of Jabal ‘Amil, and she calls upon Arabs to take up arms and restore justice whilst reassuring Palestine that it will not be abandoned:

> O Palestine, rest assured that we are a nation that protects her borders and homes,
> A nation that does not get used to oppression and does not settle for life in humiliation and belittlement,
> A nation that builds the basis of its liberation from the blood of its dead and the shackles of its imprisoned.
> …
> O Arab men, do not apologize, for the Arabs are not wanting of an apology.
> How do you wish to live comfortably, and the children of your nation have become uncertain?
> …
> We are women, and in our spirits is a flame of faith that refuses to retreat.
> So, if you do not help your brothers, then push us forward and remove from us our veil (*khimar*) [to fight].[79]

Al-Hurr expresses dissatisfaction with the Arab world because not enough has been done in the way of fighting for Palestine, and she calls out for them to remove the women's *khimar* so they may fight in place of the men. Her grievances are symbolic of widespread discontent among Arabs for the lack of unity and organization of the Arab nations, a sentiment that influenced Shi‘i attitudes toward the cause.

The growing realization that a united Arab nation and the freedom of Palestine were unlikely to become actualized is recorded in *al-‘Irfan*, particularly in the late 1940s leading up to and during the Arab-Israeli war. A news article published in the journal in 1946 writes about the case of Palestine and predicts a violent conflict involving the Arab world. It reads, “The future is bleak and fears the emergence of a general revolution that not only concerns Palestine, but rather spreads to all Arab countries because the case of Palestine has become the case of the Arabs.”[80]

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[79] Al-Hurr, Zahra. “Qawm Rakhusat Arwahuna.” *Al-‘Irfan* 32, no. 8 (July 1946): 778.
[80] “Aham al-Akhbar wa al-Ara’.” *Al-‘Irfan* 33, no. 2 (December 1946): 232–38, 234.

With this statement, the writers of *al-'Irfan* maintain their allegiance to the Palestinian cause by recognizing that it is the responsibility of all Arabs, but they acknowledge that their aspirations for the future are at risk. In a news update from the following year regarding a United Nations investigation of the situation in Palestine, they express outrage at the committee's conclusions which lean in favor of the Zionists. However, they approvingly single out Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon as the Arab countries whose cities went on strike in response to the committee's arrival.[81] The Lebanese reaction to the Palestinian cause is regarded favorably by *al-'Irfan*'s writers who, at this point in 1946, have become a part of the established and independent Lebanese nation.

The use of Qur'anic language alongside calls for Arab unity and resistance exemplifies the ways that Arabism is used as a vehicle by the Shi'i scholars to express Islamic values of divine justice and resistance to oppression. This is especially evident in a piece from 1947 titled "Palestine, our Chests Protect You" (*Falastin Tahmiki minna al-Sudoor*) written by Shaykh Ahmad 'Arif al-Zayn. In it, he writes, "O nation for whom the hearts of Muslims and Christians fall…O first of the *Qiblatayn* and third of the *Haramayn*."[82] The word used to describe the falling of the hearts is *af'ida*, which alludes to verse 37 of chapter 14 in the Qur'an (*Surat Ibrahim*). In this verse, Prophet Ibrahim asks God to cause the hearts of people to incline favorably toward his wife Hajar and his son Isma'il after he was ordered to leave them in Mecca. Moreover, Shaykh al-Zayn recalls the city of al-Quds as the first *qibla*, or direction, to which Muslims prayed in the early years of Islam. He also refers to *Masjid al-Aqsa* as the third of the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina (*Masjid al-Haram* and *Masjid al-Nabawi*). It is notable that alongside Islamic references, the author mentions the hearts of Arab Christians,

[81] "Aham al-Akhbar wa al-Ara'." *Al-'Irfan* 33, no. 8 (June 1947): 969–74, 973.
[82] Al-Zayn, Ahmad 'Arif. "Falastin Tahmiki Minna al-Sudoor." *Al-'Irfan* 34, no. 2 (December 1947): 162–65, 162.

demonstrating that these Islamic values are compatible with Arab nationalist aspirations that sought to rid the region of foreign occupiers.

There is a noticeable lack of sectarian distinction between Sunni and Shiʻi Muslims in *al-ʻIrfan*'s earlier coverage of the Palestinian cause, representing a broader attachment to Muslim identity, which continues to drive Arabist sentiments. However, the Shiʻa of Jabal ʻAmil officially became a part of the new Lebanese nation in the 1940s, which involved the formalization of their sectarian identity. More Shiʻi-specific language emerged throughout *al-ʻIrfan* as a result. A November 1947 article covering the arrival of al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni to Lebanon includes a poem that praises the Sunni mufti. He is "the leader of all Arabs, protector of his grandfather's law."[83] Shaykh al-Zayn refers to his lineage which, as the name al-Husayni suggests, can be traced back to Prophet Muhammad through the third Shiʻi Imam. The article also reports on his meeting with a Shiʻi delegation consisting of Shaykh Ahmad Rida, Shaykh Sulayman Dhahir, and parliament member Yousif al-Zayn. The author writes, "All of the Arab countries welcome the grand and noble *sayyid*, saying to him as we said in his presence, ʻcommand, prohibit, and rule, for today you are obeyed and the command is yours, not what the nations command.'"[84] Speaking on behalf of the Shiʻa of Lebanon, this delegation recognizes the authority of al-Husayni as an Arab and Islamic leader. Not only does he share the religious and ethnic identity of the Lebanese Shiʻa, but his status as a *sayyid*, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, is emphasized.

Al-ʻIrfan's December 1947 issue was released during the month of Safar on the Islamic calendar. Commemorations of the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn usually take place from the first of Muharram to the twentieth of Safar, with the latter date being the fortieth day after the

[83] "Aham al-Akhbar wa al-Ara'." *Al-ʻIrfan* 34, no. 1 (November 1947): 143–53, 144.
[84] Ibid.

Battle of Karbala'. In Islam, the fortieth day after a death is traditionally a significant period of mourning. *Al-'Irfan* marked this occasion by dedicating the Day of the Living (in reference to the Islamic tradition that martyrs are not dead, but alive) to the Arab resistance throughout time and across the region. The article, written by Ahmad 'Arif al-Zayn, states, "It is the day of al-Husayn bin 'Ali in Karbala', Iraq, the day of 'Abd al-Karim al-Khalil and his companions in Beirut and Damascus, the day of Yousif al-'Adhma in Maysalun, and the day of the martyrs who will soon drop dead in the squares of battle and honor in Palestine, defending a stolen right and injured dignity. O God, make us one of them."[85]

The article also recognizes both Muslims and Christians as martyrs, signifying the importance of unity in the Arab liberation movement through Islamic language and concepts. It assures martyrs that "even if the minarets do not cry out, and the bells and gongs do not chime on your day, you are the great saints. And even if we did not witness you, we know that you are alive." Furthermore, it goes on to state that the Arab martyrs who die for the sake of Palestine cry out the words of the *adhan*, or Islamic call to prayer: "Hasten to salvation, hasten to the best of work, hasten to *jihad*."[86] While the last phrase is not actually a part of the *adhan*, the second phrase, "hasten to the best of work" (*hayya 'ala khayr al-'amal*) is unique to the Shi'i call to prayer. Yet, in this context, al-Zayn invites all Arabs to this glorified act of martyrdom in "defense of faith and nation, preservation of Arab dignity, and indeed all of humanity, from injustice, oppression, and tyranny." Saturated with Shi'i Islamic language, the article links the Arab cause to the Battle of Karbala' and extends Shi'i belief about martyrdom and divine justice to Muslims and Christians alike. It places the mosque's minaret alongside the church's bell, and

[85] "Aham al-Akhbar wa al-Ara'." *Al-'Irfan* 34, no. 2 (December 1947): 300–318, 303.
[86] Ibid, 304.

labels all of those who fall for the Arab cause, and specifically Palestinian liberation, as martyrs who live on through the act of dying.

By November 1947, the war between the Zionists and the Palestinians had already begun, and the articles of *al-'Irfan* report on local contributions to the cause ranging from fundraising and political activism to participation in the war. In December, the journal mentions that al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni spoke with Shi'i notables from Jabal 'Amil including politicians Muhammad Safi al-Din and 'Ali Bazzi to request that they gather funds from the diaspora in Africa for the sake of Palestine.[87] Moreover, it provides a list of the casualties of 'Amili Shi'i Muslims who were martyred in the war against the Zionists, such as a youth from Bint Jubayl named Muhammad Qasim al-Zaqlout who died in Haifa.[88] The article also notes two Shi'i members of parliament, Nassar Ghalmiyya and Muhammad 'Ali Ghibtaymi volunteered to fight in Palestine. Interestingly, *al-'Irfan* does not outwardly label these individuals as Shi'i, but as the Lebanese of Jabal 'Amil. This identification with Lebanon represents the process of assimilation into the established Lebanese state. Concurrently, their continued dedication to the Palestinian cause and their focus on regional 'Amili identity demonstrate an attachment to broader notions of Arab belonging. In other words, the 'Amili Shi'a understood Lebanon to be an Arab nation, and they accepted that their community was a part of the new state. The writers of *al-'Irfan* were conscious of their unique religious worldview, but this consciousness was not sectarian in nature. Rather, Shi'i identity and values drove support for Arab unity and liberation.

In January of 1948, *al-'Irfan* published a short story by Sayyid Ibrahim Bilal titled *Labbayki ya Falastin* (At your service, O Palestine) that follows a Lebanese youth named Khalil who wants to migrate to another country in search of a better life and more financial

[87] "Aham al-Akhbar wa al-Ara'." *Al-'Irfan* 34, no. 2 (December 1947): 300–318, 306.
[88] Ibid, 307.

opportunities. His mother implores him not to leave because his brother died abroad, but he sells his land in the village and heads to the Port of Beirut. While in Lebanon's capital, he comes across countless signs and posters encouraging young men to enlist in the army to be sent to fight for Palestine. When looking at the list of people who signed up, the story notes a variety of names that indicate different religious and ethnic backgrounds. It writes, "Khalil entered the office and saw the names of the *mujahidin* (fighters) inside the sign-up notebook. His soul overflowed with bliss and his nerves danced with joy when he looked at the names of his brothers in the daily log: Elias al-Haddad, ʻAli al-Baʻalbaki, Boutros, Hanna, Maroun, Hasan, Yousif, and Husayn. His surprise when he saw the names of the Armenian *mujahidin* was so great that he stood up yelling, "*Labbayki ya Falastin*."[89] The story then narrates that Khalil returned to his village after signing up to fight for Palestine at *al-ʻIrfan*'s counter, and his mother was overjoyed not just at his return, but at his decision to enlist. It ends with his martyrdom and his mother crying out, "May my son be sacrificed for you, O Palestine. Until the eternal meeting, O Khalil."[90] The mention of names held by Shiʻi, Christian, and Sunni Arabs, as well as Armenian fighters is particularly significant, considering that the title of *mujahidin* (those engaged in Islamic *jihad*) is extended to a non-Shiʻi, non-Muslim, and even non-Arab population. This further demonstrates the ʻAmili Shiʻa's conception of identity which did not separate on the basis of religious or even ethnic lines. The Armenians in Lebanon are written as participants in the battle for God and Palestine, and through their participation, are considered to be part and parcel of the Arab and Muslim cause.

In summary, the Shiʻa of Jabal ʻAmil and the northern Palestinians have longstanding social and economic ties that generated a shared sense of identity until the Zionist and colonial

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[89] Bilal, Ibrahim. "Labbayki Ya Falastin." *Al-ʻIrfan* 34, no. 3 (January 1948): 402–8, 406-407.
[90] Ibid, 408.

projects caused their separation. *Al-'Irfan*'s documentation of the Palestinian cause during the Arab Revolt and the Arab-Israeli war demonstrates the importance of the freedom of Palestine to the 'Amili Shi'i Muslims. Throughout the course of the movement, Shi'i scholars expressed Islamic values through their support for inter-religious cooperation, which they viewed as a common act of Islamic *jihad*. Despite the use of Islamic, and sometimes Shi'i-specific language, it is applied to Muslims and Christians alike who participate in the fight for Palestine. Over time, there appears to be greater acceptance of identification with Lebanon, particularly after it was established as a new state in 1943, but this is because the Shi'i writers understood being Lebanese as an extension of being Arab. The recognition of Jabal 'Amil as a part of Lebanon coincides with Lebanese support for the freedom of Palestine and a greater awareness of Shi'i distinctness. This Shi'i consciousness is not portrayed as divisive or sectarian, but as strengthening religious unity under the banner of Arab liberation. Arab nationalism and the Palestinian cause in the 1930s and 40s served as vehicles for expressing Shi'i Islamic beliefs and values.

Chapter Two: Jabal ‘Amil under Colonial Rule, 1936-1943

In the years following World War I and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman territories were partitioned according to a mandate system that gave control of the region to Britain and France. Based on the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, in which the signatory nations agreed to split their spheres of influence in the Middle East, the British took control of Palestine, Transjordan, and Mesopotamia (Iraq), while the French controlled Syria, Lebanon, and parts of modern southern Turkey. The mandate system was a “quasi-colonial arrangement” that intended for Britain and France to directly rule those territories until a native government could demonstrate that it was capable of self-rule.[91] The Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon was formally assigned to France in 1923 and it lasted until 1946. The French expressed a desire to carve out a separate Lebanese state and form a Christian country to ensure “Christian freedom and security in a vast Arab-Muslim expanse.”[92] In other words, the colonial regime adopted the assumption that the Christian populations of the Middle East were non-Arabs, and the Lebanese Maronites were presented as the true natives of the region descending from the pre-Islamic ancient Phoenicians.[93] The French and their supporters racialized the religious groups of the Levant, effectively pitting Christians against Muslims in an effort to counter Arab nationalism.

The Early Mandate Period and Sectarian Divisions

Compared to other religious communities, the Shi‘a of Jabal ‘Amil showed greater ambivalence to the French and doubts about a Lebanese state.[94] Some, alongside the anti-

[91] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi‘ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 10.
[92] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shi‘ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah’s Islamists*, xiii-xiv.
[93] Ibid, 20.
[94] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi‘ite Islam*, 175.

colonial revolts in Syria and Palestine, formed armed resistance groups and led a series of attacks against the French in 1920.[95] These "large-scale revolts," which also saw Maronite casualties, triggered a French military expedition that collectively punished both the armed groups and Shiʿi civilians.[96] The expedition was "composed of three colonial infantry battalions and one squadron of *chasseurs d'Afrique*," and resulted in the bombardment of Bint Jubayl and the looting of Shiʿi homes.[97] For ʿAmili Shiʿi Muslims, the Mandate period began with over thirty-six deaths, ten banishments, homelessness for thousands, and heavy punitive tax rates.[98] Their status under colonial rule was subsequently worse than other communities in Lebanon, as they lacked any true political representation and experienced high rates of poverty.

Despite the violent interactions between the Shiʿa and the French Mandate, colonial identity politics sought to gain the favor of Shiʿi Muslims and separate them from their Sunni neighbors. When deciding upon the territories that would make up *Grand Liban* (Greater Lebanon), Lebanese nationalists and French authorities sought to extend the borders of this emerging nation to encompass Jabal ʿAmil, the mountainous region toward the south that consisted of a Shiʿi-majority population. While French colonial administrators and travel writers depicted the Shiʿa as uncivilized, they represented themselves as liberators of the Shiʿi Muslims who, under Ottoman rule, were not recognized as an independent religious sect. More specifically, the Shiʿa were not formally considered to be outside of the fold of the Muslim *umma*, or nation. Ottoman authorities categorized Shiʿi Muslims as Muslims, and Shiʿi scholars themselves viewed differences with Sunnis as intra-religious disagreements. In *al-ʿIrfan*, it is clear that scholars understood Shiʿism as an "attitude of mind rather than a sectarian

[95] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shiʿite Islam*, 176.
[96] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʿites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 17.
[97] Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria Including Lebanon and Palestine*, 320.
[98] Ibid.

commitment," because the journal maintained a pro-Arab unity and anti-sectarian stance throughout the Mandate period.[99] However, due to various censorships and closures imposed on the journal by the French, it did not cover French colonialism "with the same degree of freedom with which it chronicled the long Ottoman period."[100]

The colonial regime was quick to begin the process of legally dividing the Muslims into two sects to ensure that Maronite Christians would form the largest sectarian group in the emerging Lebanese nation. Some Shiʿi *zuʿama'*, such as Kamil al-Asʿad and Yusuf al-Zayn, collaborated with the French who proposed a bill to establish separate Shiʿi courts in 1923.[101] Up until this point, the Shiʿa had been categorized as Muslims by the Ottomans and were, therefore, subject to *Hanafi* Sunni jurisprudential rulings.[102] The Mandate found this especially important between 1925 and 1927 because the Great Syrian Revolt threatened to spill into Lebanon.[103] By 1926, the French formally declared the Shiʿa to be an independent and distinct religious community through the establishment of Shiʿi courts that would employ *Jaʿfari* jurisprudence to family and inheritance legal cases. As historian Max Weiss explains, "the institutionalization or, in some cases, wholesale invention of Muslim courts under colonialism was bound up with broader strategies of 'divide and rule'."[104] This move was largely symbolic as the separation of the courts officially divided Shiʿi and Sunni Muslims at the legal level, showing how "French colonial privileging of sectarian and subnational modes of identification" aimed to interrupt unified anti-colonial resistance.[105]

[99] Khalidi, "Shaykh Ahmad ʿArif al-Zayn and al-ʿIrfan," 114.
[100] Ibid, 123.
[101] Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism and the Creation of the Shiʿi Identity*, 65.
[102] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʿism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 9.
[103] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʿites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 13.
[104] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʿism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 98.
[105] Ibid, 231.

While the Shi'i *zu'ama'* began to work with and support the new confessional system imposed by the French, many Shi'i scholars rejected colonial identity politics until the definite establishment of the new Lebanese state in the 1940s. Not only did the colonial regime promote divisions between the Shi'i and Sunni Muslims, but it also suggested that there were ethnic differences between the Shi'a and other Arabs. French officials and European travelers often traced Shi'i ancestry to Persia, incorrectly depicting them as having foreign origins and provoking questions about their belonging in Lebanon.[106] *Al-'Irfan* writers pushed back against these attempts to de-Arabize the Shi'a, suggesting that they were aware that these narratives sought to divide Shi'i Muslims from Sunnis and Christians ethnically. In November 1935, for example, *al-'Irfan* published an article denying the Shi'a's need for French protection and asserting that the Shi'a of Syria were Arabs first, then Muslims, and then Shi'i Muslims.[107]

The Abisaabs explain that "a segment of the Shi'ite nationalist elite justified the new polity, but most of the peasants, religious scholars, and intellectuals fluctuated between accommodation to it, ambivalence toward it, and protest against it."[108] French authorities attempted to increase their credibility by appealing to the *'ulama'* and asking them to head the new courts. However, "their top three preferences, Shaykh Husayn Mughniyya, Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin, and Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Sharaf al-Din, all refused the nomination."[109] While most Shi'i scholars promoted the idea of Muslim unity, some clerics, such as Shaykh Munir 'Usayran (1870-1947), defended the separation as a form of religious freedom and Shi'i autonomy.[110] The issue of the courts reveals that Shi'i scholars generally leaned toward a sense of religious and

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[106] Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil and the New Lebanon*, 14.
[107] "Al-Murasala wa al-Munadhara." *Al-'Irfan* 26, no. 6 (November 1935): 455–68, 465-466.
[108] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shi'ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, xiv.
[109] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 107.
[110] Ibid, 111.

Arab unity, and that they were frustrated with the Mandate and the *zu'ama'* who collaborated with them.

<u>*Matlabiyya* and Armed Resistance</u>

The contents of *al-'Irfan* reflect the primary method used by the Shi'a to interact with the French, which was *matlabiyya*, or politics of demand.[111] Rather than violent resistance, the Shi'a mostly made demands to improve their circumstances and secure their interests. Historian Elizabeth Thompson confirms that "the lowest rung in the pecking order went to Shi'is of the south, who had the least representation in the capital, and so received virtually no jobs and few state benefits."[112] This is reflected in the Shi'i Muslims' requests for new schools, improved roads, representation in office, lower tax rates, and fair agricultural policies. Education reform, according to *al-'Irfan*, was one of the most important and necessary changes needed in Jabal 'Amil. Shiʿi scholars "blam[ed] the lack of education on the community's socioeconomic problems and marginal political representation."[113] By improving education and literacy rates, the intellectuals believed that socioeconomic development would follow. Moreover, they viewed the establishment of schools as a way to promote Arab nationalism and anti-colonial resistance against "the threat of foreign-run schools."[114] Shi'i leaders were dissatisfied with these foreign institutions because they promoted French culture and language. The latter was necessary to learn the French language as a prerequisite to holding official government posts.[115]

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[111] Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil and the New Lebanon*, 115.
[112] Thompson, Elizabeth. *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, 81.
[113] Sayed, "Education and Reconfiguring Lebanese Shiʿi Muslims into the Nation-State during the French Mandate," 292.
[114] Ibid, 294.
[115] Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism and the Creation of the Shi'i Identity*, 71.

The colonial regime, however, failed to address the needs of the Shi‘i community in Jabal ‘Amil, revealing the limits of *matlabiyya*.[116] The Shi‘a occupied fewer official posts than other communities, and taxes remained a consistent point of complaint as they were disproportionally targeted under the taxation policy. The colonial authorities “allocated 2.3 percent of the state aid budget to Shiʿi schools, while 92.5 percent of the budget went to their Christian counterparts.”[117] Moreover, French restrictions on agriculture, particularly on tobacco production, generated great resentment among the Shi‘a who primarily relied on farming for income. *Régie des Tabacs et Tombacs* (the *Régie*), the French tobacco monopoly, began its influence in Jabal ‘Amil through negotiations with the Ottomans in 1883, but under the later authority of the French Mandate, it expanded its control. By the 1920s, there was a decline in silk output, causing ‘Amili residents to depend on tobacco farming. However, “farmers in Lebanon were required to secure permission from the *Régie* in order to grow tobacco” and “there was a consequent deterioration in the quality of local tobacco and a steep reduction in crop yields.”[118] The resentment of the ‘Amili residents worsened at the beginning of 1935 when the French High Commission reinforced the *Régie*’s monopoly through a law that placed greater restrictions on tobacco trade within the Mandate’s territories.[119] In addition, there were existing frustrations with the *zu‘ama’* who stunted the growth of land ownership among the Shi‘i lower class.[120] These circumstances sparked protests across Syria and Lebanon, including the towns of Bint Jubayl and ‘Aynata in which local Muslims and Christians collectively resisted the French. Furthermore, the conditions of the ‘Amili Shi‘a strengthened Arabist attachments, with *al-‘Irfan* publishing an article that same

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[116] Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil and the New Lebanon*, 132.
[117] Sayed, “Education and Reconfiguring Lebanese Shi‘i Muslims into the Nation-State during the French Mandate,” 290.
[118] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi‘ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 189.
[119] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shi‘ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah’s Islamists*, 29.
[120] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi‘ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 188.

year reaffirming their commitment to Arab nationalism and calling for an end to the French occupation.[121]

The Mandate's neglect of the Shi'i population and their subsequent indignation undoubtedly served to further justify 'Amili support for Greater Syria. The year 1936 stands out as a year in which Shi'i Muslims contributed to the Arab nationalist cause through more active resistance against the French. It began with the signing of the Franco-Syrian and Franco-Lebanese treaties which were seen as putting a formal end to the movement for Arab unity in the Levant.[122] This alone was a catalyst for protests across the region, which was already witnessing the Arab Revolt unfold in Palestine.[123] At the same time, the 'Amili Shi'a were starting to suspect that the colonial regime was interfering with the election of members from their community to parliamentary posts.[124] This built on growing outrage against the monopolization of the tobacco industry by France, the restrictions on agricultural production, and the high tax rates.

One of the most significant instances of violent resistance to take place in south Lebanon during the Mandate period was the 1936 Bint Jubayl Revolt. While Shi'i scholars were not intensely involved in the armed revolts of 1920, they played an important role in 1936, along with some elites, by endorsing the armed resistance.[125] The Shi'a took up arms in response to the ineffectiveness of *matlabiyya* to this point, and because of the political and economic turmoil that served as the revolt's backdrop.[126] It began with the arrest of Hajj 'Ali Beydoun on March 31, 1936, for his role as an anti-colonial resistance leader. This timing coincided with the eve of

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[121] "Al-Murasala wa al-Munadhara." *Al-'Irfan* 26, no. 6 (November 1935): 455–68, 465.
[122] Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil and the New Lebanon*, 132.
[123] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 110.
[124] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shi'ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 30.
[125] Ibid, 29.
[126] Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil and the New Lebanon*, 128.

the ninth of Muharram on the Islamic calendar, meaning that Shi‘i Muslims were congregating to mourn and commemorate the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn. This is significant as the Shi‘a often turn to the oppression of Imam al-Husayn, his family, and his companions during the Battle of Karbala’ to shape their understanding of their own marginalization. When word broke out about Beydoun’s arrest, men and women leaving the *majlis*, gathered to where he was held and demanded that French police release him, and they were soon joined by hundreds more.[127] Mandate authorities, including police sent from Beirut, were told to seek out from amongst the demonstrators “those that called for the incorporation of Jabal ‘Amil into Greater Syria.”[128]

The protesters chanted slogans about bringing down the colonial regime, and tens of young men were subsequently arrested the following day. According to the Abisaabs, “women started to shout nationalist slogans, and the men followed their lead, reciting inflammatory poems” about the bloodshed of the youth and the invasion of their land by traitors.[129] Civilians from neighboring villages and towns flocked to Bint Jubayl to support the demonstrators, arming themselves with shovels, bottles, and stones to free the prisoners by force. The French soldiers, who were joined by hundreds more from across Lebanon, were given the order to shoot, leading them to kill three and wound several participants in the revolt.[130] Others across Syria joined the ‘Amili civilians by going on strike against the colonial regime in their own cities and towns, including in Damascus where Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin, a notable ‘Amili Shi‘i cleric, actively participated in the dissent.[131]

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[127] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi‘ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 192.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shi‘ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah’s Islamists*, 31.
[130] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi‘ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 194.
[131] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shi‘ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah’s Islamists*, 31.

The French military governor Zinovi Pechkoff reacted to the Bint Jubayl Revolt by dismissing it as the actions of a small group of fanatic foreigners and Muslim Arab nationalists, ignoring the large number of protestors who came from both Muslim and Christian backgrounds.[132] This is reflective of the Mandate's tendency to mischaracterize Arab nationalism as a Muslim-only movement that threatened the safety of Lebanese Christians, proving the need for a Christian state in the Middle East. Furthermore, it ignored the suffering of the people of southern Lebanon who, while chanting for unity with Syria, were also calling for political and economic justice. Despite his minimization of the revolt, Pechkoff prescribed "the permanent quartering of a troop detachment" in the rebellious towns of Bint Jubayl and al-Nabatiyya.[133] This was an opportunity for the French Mandate to justify and strengthen its presence in Lebanon.

Opposition to Colonialism in *al-ʻIrfan*

The role of *al-ʻIrfan* during the year of 1936 was limited due to the journal being closed down by the Mandate's authorities, as was the case in 1931. This was because of its "provocative articles published against the French" and "ʻArif al-Zayn's pro-Syrian political activities."[134] Only three parts of their twenty-sixth volume were printed throughout 1936, but Shiʻi frustrations with the colonial regime and its collaborators are well-documented. In March, several days before the revolt, the journal published an unauthored article titled, *al-Wataniyya Tastasrikhkum wa al-Qawmiyya Tunadikum* (Patriotism is Crying Out to You and Nationalism is Calling upon You). It severely criticizes the people of the region who supported the Mandate's

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[132] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʻites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 32.
[133] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʻism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 240.
[134] Chalabi, *The Shiʻis of Jabal ʻAmil and the New Lebanon*, 173.

divisive plans for Greater Syria and its marginalization of Jabal ʻAmil. The author, likely the journal's founder, declares:

> if we are not able to call upon the deviants to join us, we will have no choice but to call out to the rest of the people of this nation that have been deprived of all the necessities of life, so maybe the uprising youth will preserve what is left of wine in the glass of patriotism [what is left of that which they have been deprived].[135]

The same publication later indicates in its news segment that Jabal ʻAmil's tax rates are robbing the "oppressed villages" of half their incomes.[136] While the extent of *al-ʻIrfan*'s ability to ignite revolutionary feelings in the ʻAmili Shiʻa cannot be known for certain, there is no doubt that the journal propagated Arab nationalism and anti-colonial resistance during a time of political turmoil and economic suffering.

In the years following the Bint Jubayl Revolt, there continued to be political unrest in Jabal ʻAmil and across the Levant. The ongoing 1936-1939 Arab Revolt in Palestine saw the active participation of the ʻAmili Shiʻa who not only felt a sense of kinship with the Palestinians but had a personal stake in their freedom. ʻAmili markets were economically linked to the markets of northern Palestine, so British and Zionist aspirations threatened to cut them off for good. Between 1937 and 1938, strikes broke out across Lebanon, including in Shiʻi communities where the poor were still burdened by the effects of the *Régie*'s hold over the tobacco industry. At this time, *al-ʻIrfan* returned to regularly publishing news updates and opinion articles that fanned the flames of anti-colonialism. Specifically, Shaykh ʻAli al-Zayn authored a manifesto in 1937 for the literary fraternity called ʻAmili Literature Group (*ʻUsbat al-Adab al-ʻAmili*). Educated in Najaf, he criticizes the reverence of the *zuʻama'* and the socioeconomic state of

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135 "Al-Wataniyya Tastasrikhkum wa al-Qawmiyya Tunadikum." *Al-ʻIrfan* 26, no. 10 (March 1936): 721–22.
136 "Khulasat al-Anba'." *Al-ʻIrfan* 26, no. 10 (March 1936): 797–99, 798.

Jabal ‘Amil.[137] The manifesto highlights the important role of literature, and poetry in particular, as a “vehicle of the political struggle” against the elites and the French Mandate.[138] This summarizes the impact of the journal as a whole, which relied on the written works of scholars, ranging from poetry and short stories to historical research, in order to spread resistance against the French.

While the Shi‘i Muslims continued to face marginalization under the colonial regime, notable scholars from the ‘Amili community attempted to initiate change. Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi, for example, decided to take on the issue of education in Jabal ‘Amil, which had yet to see significant improvement even after local demands and demonstrations. In 1938, he established *al-Ja‘fariyya* elementary school in Tyre to “ward off the religious and political influence of the foreign missionaries” who had opened several schools in the city for the Maronite community.[139] At the same time, he opened *al-Zahra’* school for girls, but it did not last as long due to financial constraints and the lack of state support.[140] Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi’s schools aimed to teach Arab and Islamic values, generate awareness of Shi‘i identity, and promote Arab unity. However, as Linda Sayed points out, their teachings also reflected a growing acceptance of Shi‘i integration in Lebanon following the failed attempts to establish a unified Arab nation.[141] This was the case across Jabal ‘Amil where the Shi‘a were becoming increasingly aware of the approaching independent Lebanese state, and thus began to take the necessary steps to secure their place within it.

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[137] Al-Zayn, ‘Ali. “‘Usbat al-Adab al-‘Amili.” *Al-‘Irfan* 27, no. 3 (May 1937): 243–44.
[138] Khalidi, “Shaykh Ahmad ‘Arif al-Zayn and al-‘Irfan,” 116.
[139] Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism and the Creation of the Shi‘i Identity*, 76.
[140] Ibid, 77.
[141] Sayed, “Education and Reconfiguring Lebanese Shi‘i Muslims into the Nation-State during the French Mandate,” 306.

Al-'Irfan was struck with another period of forced closure by authorities from the beginning of 1942 until the spring of 1945.[142] Within approximately three years, only five parts of the thirty-first volume were released to the public, each of which was heavily censored. At the beginning of different monthly releases, Shaykh Ahmad 'Arif al-Zayn acknowledges that the publications were printed later than anticipated, alluding to censorship as the cause.[143] Various articles from this period, including those recounting 'Amili history, contain blank spaces where the authors note that several lines were "deleted by the monitors."[144] At this point, the Mandate was approaching its end, and the scholars that wrote for *al-'Irfan* began to demonstrate an acceptance of Lebanese identity. It is important to emphasize, however, that being Lebanese was depicted as an extension of being Arab, and Lebanese nationalism was understood as a subset of Arab nationalism. Both the Lebanese and Arab nationalists had a common goal to expel the French from the region, explaining the heavy censorship during this time. Despite this endorsement of Lebanese identity, the socioeconomic and political status of Shi'i Muslims had not significantly improved other than "increased participation of the Southern Shi'i community in parliament."[145]

In 1945, the journal published an opening piece called *Nahnu 'ala 'Ahduna al-Qadim* (We are in Our Old Ways) which demonstrates the convergence of identities and nationalist movements among the Shi'a. It reads, "We are Arabs before we are Muslims… We are Muslims by religion… and we are Shi'a by *madhhab*."[146] This reflects the standpoint of the aforementioned article published in 1935, [147] which revealed the commitment of the 'Amili Shi'a

[142] *Al-'Irfan* 31, no. 1 & 2 (February 1942), 1.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Dhahir, Sulayman. "Jabal 'Amil." *Al-'Irfan* 31, no. 1 & 2 (February 1942): 36–41, 39.
[145] Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil and the New Lebanon*, 135.
[146] "Nahnu 'ala 'Ahduna al-Qadim." *Al-'Irfan* 31, no. 5 & 6 (May 1945): 201–2.
[147] "Al-Murasala wa al-Munadhara." *Al-'Irfan* 26, no. 6 (November 1935): 455–68, 465-466.

to Arab nationalism. However, this work, published one decade later, adds, "We are Lebanese Syrians, and the revival of Syria and Lebanon gives us a rebellious spirit against every colonizer."[148] This statement shows the Shiʿi intellectual acceptance of Lebanese identity as part of broader Arab belonging, as well as their desire to see both Lebanon and Syria liberated from French rule. The author of the piece is not stated, but the text implies that this is the collective view of the writers of *al-ʿIrfan*.[149]

Although Lebanon was declared an independent nation in 1943, it did not receive full independence until 1946. The French arrested the members of the newly formed Lebanese government, including Shiʿi politician and later Speaker of Parliament ʿAdil ʿUsayran (1905-1998). In response to international pressure and the demands of the people, the French released the prisoners on November 22, 1943, which has since been the official day of Lebanese Independence. However, the colonial regime still attempted to "retain a foothold in Syria and Lebanon in the face of local and Allied opposition" in May 1945 by "dispatching Senegalese troops to Beirut to reinforce the French presence."[150] French colonial persistence led to violent clashes in both Syria and Lebanon where members of various religious communities called for liberation. Fouad Ajami writes that Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi sent a petition to the American Legation in Beirut, affirming Shiʿi opposition to the foreign presence and their willingness to take up arms.[151] It was not until the end of 1946 that the last of the French troops withdrew from Lebanon, ending nearly twenty-seven years of colonial rule.

For the Shiʿa of Jabal ʿAmil, the French Mandate period saw little change in the way of socioeconomic and political justice, but a significant transformation in terms of identity and

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148 "Nahnu ʿala ʿAhduna al-Qadim." *Al-ʿIrfan* 31, no. 5 & 6 (May 1945): 201–2.
149 Ibid.
150 Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 44.
151 Ibid.

ideology. Despite demands for modern infrastructure, improved education, greater agricultural freedom, and economic equality, Shiʻi Muslims continued to be neglected by the colonial regime. This was the case even after violent uprisings and instances of armed resistance, which only caused the south to receive "harsher treatment" under the colonial administration that "dominated economic and political affairs, using systematic surveillance and police coercion."[152] While their circumstances caused them to gravitate toward an Arab nationalist identity and call for unity with Syria, the inexorability of the Lebanese state pushed them to incorporate Lebanese nationalism into their Arabist beliefs beginning in the late 1930s. As demonstrated in *al-ʻIrfan*, scholars promoted being Lebanese as a subcategory of being Arab, and their anticolonial resistance included cries for the liberation of Syria *and* Lebanon. However, "even once Lebanese independence from French rule had been achieved in 1946, Shiʻi Muslims continued trying to make sense of their complicated and perilous historical circumstances." [153] Their support for Lebanon and their self-identification as Lebanese did not reflect a great change or improvement in their circumstances, but it did begin a period of more active political participation.

[152] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʻites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 13.
[153] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʻism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 24.

Chapter Three: Shi'i Muslims in the New Nation State, 1943-1948

The idea of a distinct Lebanese Republic has its roots in the twentieth century, particularly around the First World War. Regional pride for Mount Lebanon that emerged in the nineteenth century would later transform into Lebanese nationalism after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. This pride can be traced to the conflicts between the Maronite and Druze communities in the 1840s that culminated in the civil conflict of 1860.[154] The war, Christian persecution, and subsequent European intervention occurred around the time of Ottoman *tanzimat* (reform), leading to the establishment of the *mutasarrifiyya* (province) of Mount Lebanon in 1861. In other words, the socioeconomic and sectarian conflicts that took place in Mount Lebanon produced a "new political entity"[155] that relied on "sectarian identity as the only viable marker of political reform and the only authentic basis for political claims."[156] As historian Ussama Makdisi explains, religion became "the site of a colonial encounter between a self-styled 'Christian' West and what it saw as its perennial adversary, an 'Islamic' Ottoman Empire."[157] This would go on to shape Lebanese politics in the twentieth century and its reliance on sectarian identity as a way to represent the different religious communities in the nation.

The Creation of Lebanon

By 1888, the modern Lebanese territories were relegated to three provinces: the *mutasarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon, the *sanjak* (district) of Beirut, and the *sanjak* of Damascus. After Ottoman administrative reforms, Jabal 'Amil became part of the *sanjak* of Beirut, which

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[154] Harris, William. *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 147.
[155] Ibid, 148.
[156] Makdisi, Ussama. *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000, 2.
[157] Ibid.

was reinforced as a political, economic, and intellectual center. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, European presence in Lebanon increased due to political and commercial interests, but as other regions experienced economic development, Jabal ʻAmil did not.[158] This is because the British and French were mostly interested in the Druze and Maronite communities respectively, lending them their political and economic support. Conversely, the industries of Jabal ʻAmil "did not attract any European power's attention."[159] The Shiʻa, therefore, experienced socioeconomic disparities compared to the other flourishing religious communities found in the *sanjak* of Beirut and the *mutasarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon. Historian William Harris describes the region of Jabal ʻAmil during this time as "backwaters" where "peasant debt and dispossession had increased."[160]

World War I led to the decentralization of the Levant and the obsolescence of the Ottoman administrative divisions. Arab nationalism was met by Maronite leaders, such as Patriarch al-Huwayyik, with the emergence of Lebanese nationalism, and they received support from the French for their ambitions in early 1916. Britain and France were eager to shut down attempts at establishing a unified Arab state that would threaten their colonial endeavors, so the French aided the Maronites in their attempts to create an "enlarged Mount Lebanon" under French rule.[161] This enlarged region came to be described as *Grand Liban*, and would extend the borders of Mount Lebanon to encompass the territories that were the *sanjak* of Beirut and parts of the *sanjak* of Damascus (the Biqaʻ and the north). This pulled Jabal ʻAmil into the aspirations of the Lebanese nationalists, despite the 1919 King-Crane Commission discovering the preference for Greater Syria among most of the Shiʻa. This was also the case for other religious

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[158] Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism and the Creation of the Shiʻi Identity*, 33.
[159] Ibid, 35.
[160] Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011*, 171.
[161] Ibid, 174.

groups such as the Druze, Sunni Muslims, and Orthodox Christians. In September 1920, France officially declared the newly defined state of Lebanon, which would remain under direct colonial rule until 1943.

At the beginning of Lebanon's conception, Shiʻi intellectuals called for unity with Syria, a clear refusal to acknowledge the creation of the Lebanese state. However, the Franco-Lebanese treaty of 1936, which triggered a bout of angry protests, effectively stifled Arab nationalist demands for Syrian unity.[162] Not only did it dampen their hopes, but the treaty coincided with the period of unsuccessful revolts in Bint Jubayl and Palestine, and fruitless rebellions in Beirut and Tripoli. Individuals representing Syrian unity, such as Riyad al-Sulh, began emphasizing "the priority of achieving Greater Lebanon's independence from France via Christian/Muslim collaboration, postponing union with Syria to a later stage."[163] This sentiment was shared by the ʻAmili Shiʻa. The increasing certainty of Syrian and Lebanese separation caused the Shiʻi Muslims, and their scholars in particular, to adopt a new approach that incorporated their community into the new state. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, they began to see Lebanese independence as an extension of Arab nationalism.

The assimilation of Shiʻi Muslims in Lebanon required their adoption and use of the sectarian identity that had been assigned to them during the colonial period. In other words, "engaging in national life was predicated on their championing of sectarian unity and collective identity, as the very badge of their assimilation into the Lebanese national milieu."[164] Up until that point, the intellectual class of the Shiʻa had been advocates for the unification of Muslims at the legal level. To be a part of the Lebanese state, however, the Shiʻa participated in the call for

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[162] El-Solh, *Lebanon and Arabism: National Identity and State Formation*, 47.
[163] Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011*, 188.
[164] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʻism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 29.

sectarian unity, and this required their acknowledgement of official sectarian distinctness. Their status as an official sect can be traced to the separation of the Muslim religious courts under the French. The colonial regime successfully divided the Shi'i and Sunni Muslims by categorizing the differences between *Ja'fari* and *Hanafi* jurisprudence as sectarian differences rather than contrasting schools of thought. This classification carried into independent Lebanon where Shi'i sectarian identity became a "banner under which demands for Shi'i rights could be increasingly articulated" to the state.[165]

Structuring the Lebanese Government

Beginning in 1941, Maronite and Sunni leaders Bechara al-Khoury and Riad al-Sulh began negotiating the National Pact (*al-Mithaq al-Watani*), which was announced in the summer of 1943. This unwritten agreement is believed to have split political roles among the different sectarian elites, stipulating that the President must be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of Parliament a Shi'i Muslim. It also limited the positions of Deputy Speaker of Parliament and Deputy Prime Minister to Greek Orthodox Christians, and the role of Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces to the Druze. Furthermore, it required that Arab nationalists forgo all efforts to achieve unity with Syria, but recognized that "Lebanon was part of the Arab world."[166] This was to appease those with pan-Arab aspirations and encourage their support for the Lebanese state. In September of 1943, Sabri Hamada (1902-1976) was elected to the position of Speaker of Parliament, "the first time in Lebanon's history that a Shi'i had been elected to this post."[167] Habib Abu Shahla, a Greek Orthodox politician, held the

[165] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 129.
[166] Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011*, 193.
[167] El-Solh, *Lebanon and Arabism: National Identity and State Formation*, 206.

position between 1946 and 1947, but that would be the last time there was a non-Shiʻi Speaker of Parliament. The Shiʻa secured the post by protesting in 1947,[168] and this became "virtually their only important entree to government service."[169]

Despite the National Pact's depiction as a fair distribution of government power, it only produced an illusion of equality among the largest religious groups in Lebanon. Political power and civil servant posts were concentrated in the hands of Maronites and Sunni Muslims. This is due to the pact's reliance on a census conducted in 1932 to determine the division of power of the Lebanese government. The Maronite Christians formed a plurality (29%), which was used to justify their hold over the presidency and the parliamentary seats. Including other denominations, the Christians made up around half of the Lebanese population. On the other hand, the Muslims of Lebanon were divided into Sunni (22%) and Shiʻi (19.6%) Muslims.[170] Even though Shiʻi Muslims were the third largest sect in Lebanon according to the 1932 census, there was a "staggering Shi'a underrepresentation in the upper echelons of government" and the number of Shiʻi cabinet members was often equal to or less than that of the Druze, the Greek Orthodox, and the Greek Catholics.[171] The pact's dependence on the census and its disregard for demographic changes set the nation up for disproportionate political representation. There was a "trend toward a Muslim majority,"[172] and by the 1940s, "Christians had parity at best."[173] However, the fragility of the balance of power ensured that another census would not be conducted again and that the National Pact would not be revisited.

[168] Halawi, Majed. *A Lebanon Defied: Musa al-Sadr and the Shiʻa Community*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1992, 97.
[169] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shiʻite Islam*, 176.
[170] Maktabi, Rania. "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who Are the Lebanese?" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999): 219–41.
[171] Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied: Musa al-Sadr and the Shiʻa Community*, 98-99.
[172] Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011,* 183.
[173] Ibid*,* 194.

Narratives about the establishment and liberation of Lebanon tend to exclude Shiʿi Muslims, depicting the National Pact and resistance against the French as a collaborative effort between Sunni Muslims and Maronites. Other religious minorities – the Shiʿa, Greek Orthodox Christians, and the Druze - lacked "formal political recognition" and are often neglected in accounts of Lebanese history.[174] Even the non-Shiʿi politicians who are credited with founding Lebanon and defining its borders reveal a profound detachment from the Shiʿa of Jabal ʿAmil. For example, Michel Chiha (1891-1954), a Maronite Christian leader who co-founded the Lebanese constitution and served as the first president's advisor, described the south in 1944 as rooted in the past, withdrawn, and unliked.[175] As Chalabi explains, his summation of Jabal ʿAmil echoes the works of Orientalist European travel logs from the previous century that misrepresent native communities as backward.[176] The attitudes of the elites toward the ʿAmili Shiʿa reflect a colonial legacy that regards them as "less essential to the national project of Grand Liban."[177]

<u>The Sectarianization of the ʿAmili Shiʿa</u>

Like other religious groups in Lebanon, the Shiʿa began to work with the reality of the sectarian system. However, their "relationship to the Lebanese government was characterized by skepticism and frustration,"[178] Shiʿi scholars fought for a place for themselves in independent Lebanon after decades of resisting integration during French colonialism. Dissatisfied with the elites that had been representing them since the Mandate, scholars sought to improve the socioeconomic conditions of Jabal ʿAmil and to strengthen their political influence in the newly

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[174] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʿism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, 211.
[175] Chalabi, *The Shiʿis of Jabal ʿAmil and the New Lebanon*, 88.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʿites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 48.
[178] Ibid, 37.

liberated nation. They did so by appealing to the state through their assigned sectarian identity. *Al-ʻIrfan* began publishing articles whose titles incorporated Lebanese identity into Arab nationalism such as "*Labbayka ya Lubnan wa Suriya*" (We Are at Your Service O Lebanon and Syria)[179] and "*al-Mar'a al-Lubnaniyya al-Suriyya*" (The Lebanese Syrian Woman).[180] Furthermore, the journal published historical narratives that situated Shiʻi Jabal ʻAmil within the constructed narrative of Lebanese history. However, the sectarian identity that they used to demand equal power, rights, and recognition was also the basis for the discrimination against them in independent Lebanon.

One of the early criticisms of the Lebanese government found in *al-ʻIrfan* was directed toward its support and continuation of the three-year censorship period that had been initiated by the colonial regime in 1942. According to *al-ʻIrfan*, the censorship lasted even after Lebanon's government declared independence in 1943, and it primarily did so by preventing the journal from accessing paper.[181] Ahmad ʻArif al-Zayn published a letter in the April/May issue of 1945 directed to the Prime Minister, deploring the lack of access to paper and insinuating that it reflected anti-Shiʻi discrimination:

> The recent independence of Lebanon had a deep impact on our souls because it is one of the stages that we strived to reach. And we [*al-ʻIrfan*] have never intended to receive any personal benefit as a result of this independence, as the outcome suffices us in public matters. However, you started by saying: "Do you want to publish *al-ʻIrfan*?" We responded to you, "We are fully prepared for that when we receive paper," and you said, "Paper will be in your possession." And when it was in your hands, we saw you and those who were given the power over the paper, turn a blind eye to *al-ʻIrfan*'s lawful right. So, is that because *al-*

[179] Sayyid al-ʻArab, ʻAbd al-ʻAziz. "Labbayka ya Lubnan wa Suriya." *Al-ʻIrfan* 31, no. 7 & 8 (July 1945): 403.
[180] Mrouwa, ʻAliya. "Al-Mar'a al-Lubnaniyya al-Suriyya." *Al-ʻIrfan* 31, no. 5 & 6 (May 1945): 267.
[181] Al-Zayn, Ahmad ʻArif. "Al-ʻIrfan fi Thalathat Aʻwam." *Al-ʻIrfan* 31, no. 5 & 6 (May 1945): 203–8, 204.

> *ʻIrfan* fought the Mandate, supported independence for more than a third of the century, and did not deviate from its principle by even the width of a nail? Or is it because it is a Sidonian and ʻAmili journal, and the legal rights of the ʻAmilis are devoured in every [political and social] role? Or is it because it is a Shiʻi journal and the rights of the Shiʻa are devoured and their matters are divided [from you]? Or because of what???!!![182]

By depriving the Shiʻi journal of its right to publish, the discriminatory policies of the new government are exposed by the writers of *al-ʻIrfan*. However, al-Zayn and his co-authors insist on their contributions to the liberation of Lebanon, indicating that they belong in the nation that they initially refused. They suggest that their anti-colonial efforts, not only as a journal but as ʻAmili Shiʻi Muslims, aided in liberating the country.

In addition to demanding the rights of the journal, *al-ʻIrfan* served as an outlet for scholars to publicly address the government and engage in *matlabiyya* to secure the rights of the Shiʻa, just as they had done during the French Mandate.[183] Shiʻi appeals to the Lebanese government on behalf of the ʻAmili Shiʻa demonstrate the ways in which independent Lebanon preserved the systems of neglect and marginalization that were seen during the colonial period. Ahmad ʻArif al-Zayn confirms this, stating in 1945 that "the current government was formed on the ruins of the bygone government, for it [the Lebanese government] supports that which it [the French Mandate] supported, and it opposes that which it opposed."[184] The government of independent Lebanon is further criticized in an article recapping the last three years: "its [developmental] work was negligent, and in its era, strife arose in the south and the north, almost burning all of the green and dry land."[185] According to historian Juan Cole, "the South remained

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[182] Al-Zayn, Ahmad ʻArif. "Al-ʻIrfan fi Thalathat Aʻwam." *Al-ʻIrfan* 31, no. 5 & 6 (May 1945): 203–8, 204.
[183] Chalabi, *The Shiʻis of Jabal ʻAmil and the New Lebanon*, 119.
[184] Al-Zayn, Ahmad ʻArif. "Al-ʻIrfan fi Thalathat Aʻwam." *Al-ʻIrfan* 31, no. 5 & 6 (May 1945): 203–8, 204.
[185] Ibid.

deprived of resources for infrastructural development such as electricity, roads, hospitals and schools in the 1940s and 1950s."[186] This shows how the harsh living conditions of ʻAmili residents under French rule persisted under the new state.

One of the largest issues experienced by the ʻAmili Shiʻa was a lack of drinking and irrigation water.[187] *Al-ʻIrfan* documents a water crisis in December 1946 following a drought in Jabal ʻAmil. According to the news article, the government promised to distribute water from the town of Shebʻa and the Litani River, but it was not until after "voices were raised that the government sent ten trucks to transfer water to the villages that they could reach."[188] As for the villages that trucks could not reach, they "let them die of thirst."[189] The article's section on Jabal ʻAmil ends with an Arabic proverb: "have mercy on the ones on earth, so the One in heaven will have mercy on you."[190] It is clear from these grievances that the Shiʻi scholars fully understood themselves to be a part of the new Lebanese state because they believed that the rights of the Shiʻa were the responsibility of the new government. By publishing Shiʻi demands, the journal "demonstrated the scope of involvement of the ʻAmilis in the affairs of their region and confirmed their acquiescence to being part of the Grand Liban."[191]

Rather than a contradiction, the strong and consistent criticisms of the Lebanese government in *al-ʻIrfan* reveal that the Shiʻi intellectual class began the process of integration in Lebanon. This was part of the broad change among the Arab nationalists who no longer saw unity with Syria as a possibility.[192] British and French endeavors in the Levant during World War II diffused the enmity between the Arab nationalist movement and Lebanese nationalism, as

[186] Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shiʻite Islam*, 177.
[187] Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon*, 68.
[188] "Aham al-Akhbar wa al-Ara'." *Al-ʻIrfan* 33, no. 2 (December 1946): 232–38, 237.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Chalabi, *The Shiʻis of Jabal ʻAmil and the New Lebanon*, 120.
[192] El-Solh, *Lebanon and Arabism: National Identity and State Formation*, 207.

both sides sought to end European colonialism. It was the acceptance of Lebanon by the Arab nationalists, including the Shiʿi Muslim scholars, that made the liberation of the new nation a greater possibility. After Lebanese independence, the Shiʿi community remained "connected to Arab nationalist interests but also committed to the national state, the homeland and political participation, linked to universalist faith but bound by sectarian obligation."[193] In other words, they preserved their Arabist ideological foundations and maintained the rhetoric of religious unity as a Lebanese sect. It was sufficient for Shiʿi Muslims to view Lebanese identity and independence as the next phase of Arab nationalism and, therefore, *al-ʿIrfan* "became a vehicle of integration for the ʿAmili community in the new nation state of Lebanon."[194]

The acknowledgement of the *Jaʿfari* court came about in the 1940s among Shiʿi scholars who were "anxious to ascertain their legitimate place in the Lebanese nation-state."[195] Although the initial separation of Muslim courts under colonial rule was rejected by most Shiʿi intellectuals and clerics, many had yielded to its notion in independent Lebanon despite its continued controversial status. According to Chalabi, the institution of the courts "highlight[ed] a process of national integration of this politically marginal group."[196] In 1948, the community had to find someone to replace Shaykh Munir ʿUsayran who had been the president of the *Jaʿfari* court during the Mandate period. The reputable *ʿulama'* revealed their acceptance of the sectarian court system through their participation in the search for a new president. Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi, for example, stressed the need for an honest member of the Shiʿi community to head the court, and he nominated himself for the candidacy even after rejecting the French nomination nearly twenty years prior.

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193 Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʿism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon,* 232.
194 Chalabi, *The Shiʿis of Jabal ʿAmil and the New Lebanon*, 169.
195 Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shiʿites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, xiv.
196 Chalabi, *The Shiʿis of Jabal ʿAmil and the New Lebanon*, 143-144.

Shaykh Muhammad Jawad Mughniyya (1904-1979), who studied under Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi and wrote for *al-ʻIrfan*, would become a judge for the *Jaʻfari* court in 1948 and its president in 1950. He was critical of the Lebanese sectarian system, but recognized a need for Shiʻi political representation within it. He also continued to advocate for Muslim and Arab unity in the context of independent Lebanon. In *al-ʻIrfan*'s July 1946 volume, the journal published a transcript of Shaykh Mughniyya's lecture to an Islamic college in Sidon titled *al-Din wa al-Qawmiyya: Law lam akun ʻAraban Atamannayt an akun* (Religion and Nationalism: If I Were Not Arab, I Would Have Wished to Be). As the title suggests, he calls attention to the honor associated with the Arab identity which he traces to the fact that God chose the Prophet Muhammad to be an Arab. He states, "No one is above the Arabs except the Prophet – he is from among them – no one is above them except their own selves."[197] He also argues that "religion and Arabs are two forces that support each other."[198]

Not only does faith produce a good homeland (*watan*) according to Shaykh Mughniyya, but "love of the homeland comes from faith."[199] As a Shiʻi cleric and intellectual, he mentions Islamic values as a means to strengthen the nation, but does not name Shiʻism in particular. This maintains a sense of Islamic unity throughout the text, which is further supported by his reference to the first two caliphs according to Sunni doctrine, who are typically rejected in Shiʻism. Interestingly, however, he also discusses religion more broadly, demonstrating an appeal to the different religious communities. He makes a point to incorporate Christians in his message, stating that "the scholar (*ʻalim*) in the eyes of religion is an advocate of truth, the leader (*zaʻim*) is a servant of the homeland, the Muslim is one who follows Muhammad (peace be upon

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[197] Mughniyya, Muhammad Jawad. "Al-Din wa al-Qawmiyya: Law Lam Akun ʻAraban Atamannayt an Akun." *Al-ʻIrfan* 32, no. 8 (July 1946): 752–55, 752.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid, 753.

him) in action and word, and the Christian is one who acts according to the teachings of the Messiah."[200] Rather than adopt a sectarian point of view, Shaykh Mughniyya uses faith as a unifying characteristic or value among the Arabs in Lebanon. This reveals the perpetuation of Arabist sentiments among the Shi'i intellectual class, while demonstrating how they were expressed in *al-'Irfan* to adapt to the reality of Lebanese independence.

In 1947, *al-'Irfan* further supported Islamic unity in its sectarian context by promoting *Jama'at al-Taqrib Bayn al-Madhahib al-Islamiyya* (Group of Bringing Together the Islamic Schools). This was an international group composed of scholars and leaders from among the Sunnis, Imamis (the Shi'a), and Zaydis who aimed to encourage and generate dialogue between members of the different schools of thought within Islam. The article states that "[*al-'Irfan*] is completely ready to serve this group as much as it can," and it shares a letter that it received from their secretary Muhammad Taqi al-Qummi.[201] In it, he praises the journal for "the aims that [*al-'Irfan*] always invited and called upon," which are to seek Islamic unity and cooperation.[202] This is especially significant against the backdrop of Lebanese sectarianism, which categorizes the various schools of thought as disparate sects.

<u>Shi'i Adaptation and Marginalization</u>

Because they wanted to make a place for themselves in Lebanon, the Shi'a coped with the failure of the new Lebanese state to address their needs by "build[ing] institutions of their own."[203] Shi'i intellectuals and clerics believed that their community's underrepresentation in

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[200] Mughniyya, Muhammad Jawad. "Al-Din wa al-Qawmiyya: Law Lam Akun 'Araban Atamannayt an Akun." *Al-'Irfan* 32, no. 8 (July 1946): 752–55, 754.
[201] "Aham al-Akhbar wa al-Ara'." *Al-'Irfan* 33, no. 8 (June 1947): 969–74, 969.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 115.

Lebanese politics could be attributed to their lack of access to education, producing a cyclical problem that they had to break. As a result, some scholars gathered funds from the community and went on to establish schools, and it was in these educational institutions that the Shiʿi youth were taught to identify with a Lebanese Shiʿi identity. Linda Sayed's analysis of the role of Sayyid Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi's *al-Jaʿfariyya* school finds that it had strong "Lebanese nationalist overtones," and it "presented itself as the holder of Lebanese Arab history and culture, and one that attempted to combat foreign influences."[204] The school's conception of Lebanon viewed the Shiʿa of Jabal ʿAmil as integral to the new state, but it was inherently critical of the state's policies, particularly its enduring relationship with the West. The school taught Shiʿism as a crucial part of its curriculum alongside Arab and Lebanese history and literature, aiming to produce well-rounded Muslim citizens who would bring about the changes needed in the ʿAmili Shiʿi community, and combat the marginalization that was expressed in *al-ʿIrfan*.[205] In fact, Shaykh Ahmad ʿArif al-Zayn viewed the journal as an important part of educating not just the Shiʿi youth, but all students of Lebanon. In his letter to the Prime Minister, he writes, "Unless the government of complete independence respects itself and respects the correct principles, then it should not only give enough paper to *al-ʿIrfan*, but it should also help in distributing hundreds of copies to all of its schools and institutions."[206]

Another way that Shiʿi Muslims responded to their marginalization in independent Lebanon was by joining "ideological movements (Communist, Arab, and Syrian nationalist), which many, particularly those with a Najafi education, eventually did."[207] Some transnational

[204] Sayed, "Education and Reconfiguring Lebanese Shiʿi Muslims into the Nation-State during the French Mandate," 307.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Al-Zayn, Ahmad ʿArif. "Al-ʿIrfan fi Thalathat Aʿwam." *Al-ʿIrfan* 31, no. 5 & 6 (May 1945): 203–8, 204.
[207] Chalabi, *The Shiʿis of Jabal ʿAmil and the New Lebanon*, 113.

political groups appealed to the Shi‘a of Jabal ‘Amil, including scholars and the working class, who suffered economically and remained attached to a broad Arab identity. For example, "the Arab Ba‘ath Socialist Party, officially founded in Damascus in April 1947, began to spread rapidly in South Lebanon, in the Shi‘i areas surrounding Beirut, as well as in Tripoli."[208] Movements such as the Communist Party also resonated with many Shi‘i Muslims for its demands of equality, justice, and sociopolitical change. Those drawn to it "attempted to reconcile Marxist ideology with Islamic doctrine but it was a source of great contestation among Shi‘i scholars."[209] Moreover, Shi‘i discourses about the struggles and resistance of Imam ‘Ali and Imam al-Husayn could be detected in the narrative of the "Communist struggle against capitalist exploitation and European domination."[210] The Shi‘a of Jabal ‘Amil were also deeply affected by the Palestinian *Nakba* in 1948 and a large number of Shi‘i Muslims joined the Palestinian resistance fighters.

Although the ‘Amili Shi‘i Muslims initially opposed the separation of Lebanon from Syria, they reluctantly turned their attention away from establishing a united Arab nation in the Levant in order to rid the region of its colonial presence. The Shi‘i intellectual class recognized the need to negotiate their place within independent Lebanon if they wanted to secure their community's political, social, and economic interests. Although they never relinquished their loyalties to Arab unity, they adapted their ideology to include Lebanon in that discourse and participated in the country's sectarian system. However, they found that the marginalized status they held under colonial rule was perpetuated by the Lebanese government. By criticizing the state and presenting demands on behalf of the Shi‘i sect, the intellectual platform of *al-‘Irfan*

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[208] El-Solh, *Lebanon and Arabism: National Identity and State Formation*, 314.
[209] Abisaab and Abisaab, *The Shi‘ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists*, 45.
[210] Ibid, 55.

participated in the integration process. They used their assigned sectarian identity to appeal to the state, revealing an acceptance of the reality of Lebanon. It should be noted, however, that this acceptance did not signify satisfaction, as Shi‘i scholars maintained the call for religious unity and cooperation in the context of divisive politics while advocating for themselves within the journal.

Conclusion

The post-World War I years constituted a significant political change in the Levant as it was still recovering from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Despite aspirations for a unified Arab nation under the banner of Greater Syria, British and French authorities imposed land divisions that triggered resentment and resistance among the Arab nationalists across the region, not least of all the Shiʻi Muslims of Jabal ʻAmil. The arrival of colonial rule coupled with the Zionist campaign in Palestine were some of the most impactful catalysts for unified Arab resistance, and they would set the political tone in the Levant for decades to come. The period between 1936 and 1948 marked several important events including the Arab Revolt in Palestine, the Bint Jubayl Revolt, the Franco-Syrian and Franco-Lebanese treaties, Syrian and Lebanese independence, and the Palestinian *Nakba*.

Amidst this political turmoil, the ʻAmili Shiʻa took an active role in promoting Arab nationalism and Lebanese liberation. They participated in the resistance movement against colonialism and fought in the war against Israel. At the same time, they struggled to overcome their socioeconomic marginalization under various political entities, a legacy of their experiences under Ottoman rule that was inherited by the French regime and, eventually, the Lebanese government. Shiʻi scholars played a crucial role during the 1930s and 40s and acted as activists by using their literary platforms to contribute to political causes and demand the fulfillment of Shiʻi rights. *Al-ʻIrfan* was one such platform that "was in spirit a politically prudent magazine which allows us to observe how the *ʻulama'* class in particular saw the world of Jabal 'Amil."[211]

The writers of *al-ʻIrfan* not only worked to secure Shiʻi interests but actively shaped ʻAmili Shiʻi identity during the spread of competing nationalisms and ideologies in the Levant.

[211] Khalidi, "Shaykh Ahmad ʻArif al-Zayn and al-ʻIrfan," 123.

This identity remained consistent in its commitment to Shiʿism, Arabism, and religious unity, but displayed a degree of flexibility in terms of national association. For example, in the 1930s, articles in *al-ʿIrfan* insisted on Jabal ʿAmil's belonging to Syria and expressed a desire for a unified Arab nation. The 1940s, however, which were characterized by Lebanese independence, saw ʿAmili Shiʿi scholars adopt a form of Arabism that accepted Lebanon's separation from Syria. The certainty of Lebanese liberation and the desire to end French colonialism caused the intellectual community to make a place for itself in the new nation. This meant that they had to adapt to the sectarian system by appealing to the state as a Shiʿi sect.

The adaptability of Islamic and Arabist identity to different forms of national belonging reveals that religious and cultural values are central to how the Shiʿi scholars defined themselves and their community. Their contributions to Palestinian liberation, Arab nationalism, anti-colonialism, and Lebanese independence show that these movements were vessels for the expression of Shiʿi Islamic beliefs and regional pride, both in the ʿAmili and Arab sense. Moreover, it is important to note that the significance of Shiʿi scholarly opinion during this time is linked to the intersection between religious and political authority that occurs within Shiʿism. That is why it is important to recognize the role of *al-ʿIrfan* as an influential public platform for religious scholars and intellectuals to communicate with the ʿAmili Shiʿi community and with Muslims and Christians across the Arab world.

The journal became responsible for promoting a "communitarian identity" that placed Shiʿi Muslims within a broader and religiously diverse Arab community.[212] This explains the statement, "We are Arabs before we are Muslims… We are Muslims by religion… and we are Shiʿa by *madhhab*."[213] Emphasis on Islamic unity took precedence over Shiʿi particularism, and

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[212] Chalabi, *The Shiʿis of Jabal ʿAmil and the New Lebanon*, 173.
[213] "Nahnu ʿala ʿAhduna al-Qadim." *Al-ʿIrfan* 31, no. 5 & 6 (May 1945): 201–2.

it did not matter to Shi‘i scholars whether they expressed their Islamic and Arabist identity through Syrian or Lebanese national belonging. This is evident in *al-‘Irfan*’s assertion, “We are Lebanese Syrians,” despite its rejection of Lebanese separatism decades prior.[214] Furthermore, the sectarianization of Shi‘ism that occurred after independence was resisted by Shi‘i scholars who did not want to divide the Muslim *umma* until it became necessary to interact with the Lebanese government and push for Shi‘i equality.

While this thesis contributes to the discussion of ‘Amili Shi‘i attitudes and identity in the context of the Arab nationalist movement in the Levant, it must be emphasized that they also had connections to other Arab and non-Arab countries such as Iraq and Iran. *Al-‘Irfan* demonstrates a great interest in international affairs, especially in these two nations which have significant Shi‘i populations. These transnational links extend from centuries of a shared scholarly heritage, as Shi‘i Muslims travelled to teach and learn in Islamic seminaries across the region. Furthermore, the developments that occurred in Jabal ‘Amil and the contributions of *al-‘Irfan* between 1936 and 1948 contextualize the events of the latter half of the twentieth century in Lebanon. The journal continued its publication into the 1990s, and it documents a range of historic events such as the arrival of Imam Musa al-Sadr and the start of the Lebanese Civil War. *Al-‘Irfan* is undoubtedly a valuable source of information that chronicled Shi‘i resistance and arguably contributed to the community’s mobilization.

[214] “Nahnu ‘ala ‘Ahduna al-Qadim.” *Al-‘Irfan* 31, no. 5 & 6 (May 1945): 201–2.

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